

## AN ANALYSIS OF VARIOUS SOCIO ECONOMIC FACTORS OF DECLINING SEX RATIO IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

The disliking for female child is not a new phenomenon in India. This is the reason that sex ratio has mostly remained against female child. This paper attempts to examine some of the socio-economic factors of declining sex ratio in different states in India. Three important factors that are examined in this paper are per capita income, literacy rate and incidence of crime against women. The southern states of Kerala and Tamilnadu have high per capita income and high sex ratios, whereas, the economically affluent northern states of Haryana, Punjab and Gujrat have much lower sex ratios. Overall there has been no correlation between per capita income and sex ratio in India.

State wise comparison of sex ratio and literacy rate brings out that southern states of Kerala and Tamilnadu have high literacy rate and a favorable sex ratio. Punjab and Haryana have comparatively lower literacy rate and lower sex ratios. The other states with low literacy as well as low sex ratio are the states of Madhya Pradesh, UP, Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan and Bihar. There has been a positive correlation between sex ratio and literacy rate.

State wise comparison of sex ratio and crime against women in India was also made. There is found no clear cut association between incidence of crime against women and sex ratio. This might be due to non-reporting of crime or due to other socio cultural variations among different states. Hence education is the key to change of attitude and outlook towards women. If we want a better society providing equal rights to women, we must educate our youths to bring them out of orthodox outlook towards women.

**Keywords: Sex Ratio, Socio-Economic Factors, Missing Girls, Gender Discrimination**

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## Introduction

The World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development, shows that there has been disparity in the rate at which girls and women die relative to men in developing countries. Globally, excess female mortality after birth and “missing” girls at birth account for an estimated 3.9 million women each year in low- and middle-income countries. About two-fifths are never born due to a preference for sons, one sixth die in early childhood, and over one third die in their reproductive years.

The phenomenon of female infanticide is as old as many cultures, and has likely accounted for millions of gender-selective deaths throughout history. It remains a critical concern in a number of "Third World" countries today, notably the two most populous countries, China and India. Female infanticide reflects the low status accorded to women in most parts of the world; it is arguably the most brutal and destructive manifestation of the anti-female bias that pervades in male dominated societies. It is closely linked to the phenomena of sex-selective abortion, which targets female fetuses almost exclusively, and neglect of girl children.

India is growing dynamically in every field. Today, the boom in economy, technological development and improved infrastructure has become nation's pride. The country has witnessed advancements in all fields but bias against girl child is still prevailing in the country. This social evil is deep rooted in Indian ethos and the most shocking fact is that the innovative and high end technologies are used in brutally killing the Indian girl child. Innovative techniques, like biopsy, ultrasound, and other scan tests devised to detect genetic abnormalities, are highly misused by number of families to detect gender of the unborn child. These clinical tests are highly contributing to the rise in genocide of the unborn girl child.

According to a recent report by the UNICEF, up to 50 million girls and women are missing from India's population as a result of systematic gender discrimination. In India, sex ratio has been unfavorable towards women. There are 940 women for every 1000 men in India. The accepted reason for such a disparity is the practice of female infanticide and female feticide in India. A number of socio economic reasons have been outlined for the dislike of a female child in India. Instead of girl, a boy is given preference because a boy is considered a support in old age.

Marriage of a girl is considered as a burden on her parents due to prevalence of Dowry system and enormous expenditures incurred on nonsensical formalities associated with the marriage of a daughter. Dowry is so scaring that parents are not sure whether after giving good dowry; their daughter will have a comfortable married life. For a poor family, the birth of a girl child can signal the beginning of financial ruin and extreme hardship. Crime against women is considered as another important factor for the dislike of a girl child and consequently falling sex ratio.

This paper attempts to examine some of the socio-economic causes of declining sex ratio in India. For analysis a sample of 14 major states of India has been taken. These states are Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal. The problem of declining sex ratio prevails more in the states of Haryana, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. This paper broadly attempts to examine three socio economic factors of sex ratio namely per capita income, literacy rate and incidence of crime against women. A comparison of sex ratio in various states is made on the basis of these three factors. The study is based on secondary data collected mainly from Economic Surveys, Census of India and National Crime Records Bureau. For analysis simple statistical techniques of percentages, ratios and rank correlation have been used.

### **State wise analysis of sex ratio and per capita income**

A male child has always been preferred over a female child in India, as a male child is supposed to be contributing to the family income. On the other hand a female is considered to be an economic burden on the family. After independence there has been a significant growth in the income levels in India. It was expected that sex ratio would improve in all states with the rise in income levels. In this section an attempt has been made to study the relation between per capita income and sex ratio in different states of India. Table I presents a comparison of per capita income and sex ratio in 14 major states of India. The southern states of Kerala and Tamilnadu have high per capita income of Rs. 71434 and Rs. 72993 respectively. The sex ratio in these two states is impressively high at 1084 and 995 respectively. The economically weaker states MP, UP, J & K, Rajasthan and Bihar have lower sex ratios. Thus there seems to be a positive association between per capita income and sex ratio. However the economically affluent states of

Haryana, Punjab and Gujarat have much lower sex ratios. After green revolution there has been a significant rise in incomes of peasantry class in Punjab and Haryana. They want a male child to be the heir of their land. Moreover with the rise in income in these states they have a greater access to sex determination tests. Thus with economic affluence the sex ratio in these states have declined.

For analysis, the coefficient of rank correlation between nominal per capita income and sex ratio was calculated (Table II). It was found to be insignificant at 0.12 with t- value of 0.40.

State	Sex Ratio(no. of females per thousand males)	Nominal Per Capita Income (2010-11)	Literacy Rate(percent)	Incidence of Crime against Women(per lakh)
Bihar	916	20708	63.8	23.41
Gujarat	914	75115	79.3	33.58
Haryana	877	94680	76.6	50.31
Himachal Pradesh	974	65535	83.8	27.13
Jammu & Kashmir	883	37496	68.7	58.60
Kerela	1084	71434	93.91	61.21
Madhya Pradesh	930	32222	70.6	47.75
Maharashtra	946	83471	80.1	29.87
Punjab	893	69737	76.7	24.98
Rajasthan	926	39967	67.1	63.76
Tamil Nadu	995	72993	80.3	21.23
Uttar Pradesh	908	26355	71.7	24.25
Uttarakhand	963	66368	79.6	21.50
West Bengal	942	48536	77.1	70.32

Thus overall there has been no correlation between per capita income and sex ratio in India.

### State wise analysis of sex ratio and literacy Rate

Education has been considered as an important factor for changing the outlook towards women. With rise in literacy rate it is expected that we head towards a society which provides an equal status to women. In this section an attempt has been made to study the relation between sex ratio and literacy rate in different states.

**Table I: Sex Ratio, Per Capita Income, Literacy Rate and Crime against Women**

*Compiled from Census of India (2011), Economic Survey (2011-12) and National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs.*

**Table II: Rank Correlation between Sex Ratio and Other Variables**

Variables	Coefficient Of Rank Correlation	t-Value	Degrees of Freedom	Critical Value	Significant/ Insignificant
Sex Ratio and Per Capita Income	0.12	0.40	12	2.18	Insignificant
Sex Ratio and Literacy Rate	0.70	3.41	12	2.18	Significant
Sex Ratio and Incidence of crime against women	-0.11	-0.39	12	2.18	Insignificant

Table I presents state wise comparison of sex ratio and literacy rate. The literacy rate in Kerala is highest at 93.91 percent. It also ranks first in sex ratio with 1084 women per thousand males. Tamilnadu has a Literacy rate of 80.3 percent with a high sex ratio of 995. The literacy rate of

Himachal Pradesh is 83.8 percent and sex ratio is also good at 974. Punjab and Haryana have almost same literacy rate of about 77 percent with low sex ratios. The sex ratio in Punjab is low at 893, whereas the figure for Haryana is even worse at 877. The other states with low literacy as well as low sex ratio are the states of Madhya Pradesh, UP, Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan and Bihar.

For analysis coefficient of rank correlation between sex ratio and literacy rate is calculated. There is found a high degree of rank correlation between sex ratio and literacy rate. The coefficient of rank correlation is 0.70 with t-value of 3.41. The critical value of t for 12 degrees of freedom is 2.18. Thus the hypothesis of no correlation between literacy rate and sex ratio is rejected. Thus there has been a positive correlation between sex ratio and literacy rate.

### **State wise analysis of sex ratio and crime against women**

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2005) outlines a number of Gender violence throughout the life cycle of a woman through prenatal phase, infancy, childhood, adolescence, reproductive age and old age. They are emotionally and physically abused, provided differential access to food and medical care. There are problems of child marriage, sexual abuse by family members and strangers, child prostitution, rape, women trafficking, courtship, violence, sexual abuse at workplaces, dowry abuse and murders, partner homicide, legal discrimination and abuse and exploitation of widows.

In India, a male child is considered as a mean of social security. On the other hand there has been a sense of insecurity with a girl child. Parents and other family members are always concerned about the security of girls. Women are always more vulnerable to crime. There are incidence of rape, molestation and abuse against women. So the society remains skeptical about the security of a woman and prefers not to have a female child.

Table I presents state wise comparison of sex ratio and crime against women in India. In Tamilnadu incidence of crime against women is just 21.23 per lakh and sex ratio is 995. Whereas in Kerala the incidence of crime against women is 61.21 per lakh and sex ratio is 1084. In Punjab crime against women is 25 per lakh and sex ratio is low at 893. These figures are 50.31 and 877

respectively for Haryana. Thus no clear cut association between incidence of crime against women and sex ratio is observed. The coefficient of rank correlation between these two variables is found to be as low as -0.11 with t value of -0.39. Thus the hypothesis of no association between incidence of crime against women and sex ratio cannot be rejected. This might be due to non-reporting of crime or due to other socio cultural variations among different states.

## Conclusions

The issue of missing women in India is a complex phenomenon. There are a number of socio economic factors responsible for the dislike of a female child. This paper attempts to examine some of these socio-economic factors of declining sex ratio in different states in India. Three important factors that are examined in this paper are per capita income, literacy rate and incidence of crime against women.

The southern states of Kerala and Tamilnadu have high per capita income and high sex ratios. The economically weaker states MP, UP, J & K, Rajasthan and Bihar have lower sex ratios. The states of Haryana, Punjab and Gujarat though being economically affluent have much lower sex ratios. With rise in incomes of these states they have a greater access to sex determination tests. Thus with economic affluence the sex ratio in these states has declined. Overall there has been no correlation between per capita income and sex ratio in India.

State wise comparison of sex ratio and literacy rate brings out that southern states of Kerala and Tamilnadu have high literacy rate and a favorable sex ratio. Punjab and Haryana have comparatively lower literacy rate and lower sex ratios. The other states with low literacy as well as low sex ratio are the states of Madhya Pradesh, UP, Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan and Bihar. There has been a positive correlation between sex ratio and literacy rate.

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Hence education is the key to change of attitude and outlook towards women. If we want a better society providing equal rights to women, we must educate our youths to bring them out of orthodox outlook towards women and follow Guru Nanak's teaching, "So Kyun Manda Aakhiye, Jit Jameh Raajan".

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