



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2021/10.09.29>

SEX RATIO IN INDIA- A STUDY

Dr. Biswajit Das

Assistant Professor in Economics

Kamrup College

Chamata, Nalbari

ABSTRACT

India is missing about 37 million women. The ideal ratios of women to men are used to calculate the extra number of women who would have been living the country. In India, this ratio is 0.94. Despite the increase in population and the improvements in health and education, the ratio of women to men has actually worsened in the last few decades. There are several reasons, both visible and not visible for this staggering deficiency in the total number of women in India, which adversely affected in the society. Against this background the paper attempts to highlight the status of missing women in India along with their causes and consequences. It also suggests some policy measure to curb missing women in India.

KEYWORDS: Estimated, Estimated, Ideal, Improvement, Worsened.

INTRODUCTION

The phrase missing women was first coined in the late 1980's by Indian economist Amartya Sen, when he showed that in parts of the developing world, the ratio of women to men in the population is suspiciously low. The worsening sex ratio in the countries such as Indian and China reflected the gross neglect of women. He estimated that more than one hundred million women were missing due to gender discrimination. The economist observed that the demographic deficit of women affecting mainly Asia and North African went against biological trends, indeed when they receive the same care, infant boys are normally more vulnerable to mortality than girls. The term missing women indicated a shortfall in the number of women relative to the expected number of women in a region or country. As per A.K. Sen estimate, more than a hundred million women were missing. It is most often measured through sex ratio, and is theorised to be caused by sex-selective abortions, female infanticide and inadequate health care and nutrition for female children. A.K sen's original research found that while there are typically more women than men in European and North American countries at around 0.98 men to 1 woman for most countries, the sex ratio of developing countries in Asia, as well as Middle East is much higher in number of males for each female. In China the ratio of men to women is 1.06 far higher than most countries. The world economic Forum's just released report- The Global Gender Gap Index, 2017 shows that India's poor showing on gender equity has hit rock botton. It has been ranked 108 out of 144 countries, a fall of 21 places from last year's 1987 and its lowest since the index was developed in 2006. It would be safe to say that, at this rate it would take centuries to close the wide gap between Indian men and women. The report flags two indicators as being particularly guilty. The first is health and survival, where India is in bottom four, largely against a falling sex ratio at birth and the lack of access to health care. The second is economic participation and opportunities for women. Despite gains in education, women's work participation rate stands at an abysmal 27 per cent. According to World Bank report, about 19.6 million women have dropped out of the workforce between 2004-05 and 2011-12. It is a serious matter of concern to examine the issue and to identify root causes of missing women and to suggest policy measures to mitigate the problem.

OBJECTIVES

The study is purely based on secondary sources of data and it aims to focus on status of missing women in India, its basic causes and adverse consequences and attempts to suggest policy measures.

Methodology

The study is purely based on secondary sources of data collected from Census Report, Newspapers and magazines.

SEX RATIO IN INDIA

Sex ratio is used to describe the number of females per thousand of males. Sex ratio is a valuable source for finding the population of women in India and what is the ratio of women to that of men in India. In the population census 2011 it was revealed that the population ratio in India 2011 is 940 females per 1000of males. The sex ratio 2011 shows an upward trend from the census 2001 data. Census 2001 revealed that there were 933 females to that 1000 males. Since, decades India has seen a decreasing in the sex ratio, but since the last two of the decades there has been in slight increase in the sex ratio. Since, the last five decades the sex ratio has been moving around 930 of females to that of 1000 of males.



Cover Page



DOI: http://ijmer.in.doi./2021/10.09.29

There are also states such as Punducheruy and Kerela where the number of women is more than the number of men. Kerala houses a number 1084 female to that of 1000 males. While Puducherry and Kerela are the only two states where the number of females is more than the number of males there are also states like Karnataka, Andhrapradesh and Maharastra where the sex ratio 2011 is showing considerable sign of improvements. Some facts related to sex ratio in India follows, the main cause of the decline of the sex ratio in India is due to the biased attitude which is meted out to the women.

Table-1: Sex ratio of India

States	2011 Census		2001 Census	
	Sex ratio	Child sex ratio	Sex ratio	Child sex ratio
1.Kerela	1084	919	933	927
2.Puducherry	1037	967	1001	967
3.Tamil Nadu	966	943	987	942
4. Andhra Pradesh	993	939	978	961
5. Chhattisgarh	991	969	989	975
6. Meghalaya	989	970	972	973
7. Manipur	985	930	974	957
8. Orissa	979	941	972	953
9.Mizoram	976	970	935	964

Source: Statistical handbook, 2011

The top five states with highest female sex ratio in India are Kerela, Puducherry, Tamil nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. On the other hand, bottom five states with lowest female sex ratio in india are Daman in Daman and Diu has the lowest sex ratio of only 618 females per 1000 males. Dadra and Nagar haveli another union territory also has a very low sex ratio of 775 females per 1000 male. Chandigarh has a sex ratio of 818 female per 1000 male. NCT of Delhi has a sex ratio of 866 female per 1000 male. Again, Hariyana has a sex ratio of 877 female per 1000 male.

The cross-country experience shows that over 90 million females were missing from expected population in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan, South Korea and Taiwan alone. Guilmoto in his 2010 report uses recent data except for Pakistan and estimates a much lower number of missing girls in Asia and Non-Asian countries, but notes that the higher sex ratios in numerous countries have created a gender gap-shortfall of girls in the 0-19 age group. Table-2

Table-2; Gender gap across Asian and Non-Asian Countries

Country	Gender gap 0-19 age group (2010)	Percentage of females
Afghanistan	265,000	3
Bangladesh	416,000	1.4
China	25,112,000	15
India	12,618,000	5.3
Nepal	125,000	1.8
South Korea	336,000	6.2
Singapore	21,000	3.5
Vietnam	139,000	1

Source: Guilmoto, 2010.

India's Gender Gap

India's story in the global gender gap review is a little good news followed by a lot of bad news. The good news first: The 73rd (Panchayat) amendment to the Constitution, passed in 1993, has brought over one million women at the grassroots into the political system. Another shining indicator relates to the female head of government.

Sixteen of the last 50 years were occupied by a female in the executive office and India holds the 4th position in the world. (And this is without counting bigwigs like Sonia Gandhi, Mayawati and Jayalalitha!) India's performance in the political



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2021/10.09.29>

empowerment sub-index is strong relative to the rest of the world, ranking at 24th position, although only 27% of the gender gap has been closed in this category.

Women hold 11% of the positions in parliament and 10% of ministerial-level positions, placing India in 100th and 93rd positions, respectively, on these indicators. And now the bad news: India holds the last position (134th) in the health and survival sub-index.

Women live only one year longer than men (54 years for women vs. 53 years for men). By comparison, the standards used by the UN's Gender-Related Development Index reflect an "optimal" gap of five years. This places India in 119th position among the 134 countries on this variable.

The special edition of The India Gender Gap Review 2009 ranks India 114th out of 134 countries covered by the Global Gender Gap Index, even though it has closed 93% of the health gender gap, 84% of the education gap, 41% of the economic participation gap and 27% of the political empowerment gender gap.

Only 42% of births in the country are supervised by health professionals. Close to 300 Indian women die every day during childbirth or of pregnancy-related causes. India also has among the worst sex ratios at birth in the world, ranking 131st on this variable.

While the "normal" sex ratio at birth is considered to be 1.06 boys for every girl that is born, in India this average is 1.12 boys for every girl. The infant mortality rate for boys and girls is 56 and 61, respectively, out of 1,000 live births.

India's performance on girls' education variables remains weak. In the educational attainment sub-index, India ranks 121st. The literacy rate for women (53%) is still only two-thirds that of men (76%). Close to 245 million Indian women lack the basic capability to read and write.

Current gaps on primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment rates place India in 113th, 123rd and 103rd positions, respectively. Almost twice as many girls as boys are pulled out of school or never sent to school.

In the economic participation and opportunity sub-index, India holds 127th position, having closed a little over 41% of the gender gap in this category. Women's labour force participation, at 36%, is less than half of the labour force participation rate of men (85%).

Women's estimated earned annual income (US\$ 1,185) is less than a third of men's income (US \$ 3,698). However, the perceived gap in wages for similar work is a little narrower, with women's incomes perceived to be roughly two-thirds of men's incomes. Finally, women make up only 3% of legislator, senior official and managerial positions.

Women, as half of the human capital of India, will need to be more efficiently integrated into the economy in order to boost India's long-term competitive potential. In order to achieve this integration, Indian companies will need to set targets, improve policies to close salary gaps and promote work-life balance.

CAUSES BEHIND MISSING WOMEN IN INDIA

The sex ratio of Indian population has always been of topical interest for the demographers, social scientists, women's groups, research scholars and various planners and policy makers. Several causes are adduced to explain the consistently low level of sex ratio and their further decline in the country. Some of the important reasons commonly put forward are highlighted below. Female Foeticide: The rapid spread and use of ultrasound as well as amniocentesis for sex determination are playing vital role in female foetus-induced abortions which is called as High-tech sexism by Amartya Sen.

Female Infanticide: In India there is still preference for male child and in some areas of the country the female infanticide is still common. At least 117 million girls around the world demographically go "missing" due to sex-selective abortions according to United Nations Populations fund.



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2021/10.09.29>

Education – Due to illiteracy, people are unaware about the power and role of women in today's era. The role of education has a great influence on the sex ratio scenario of India. Child marriages are a common part of the Indian society. Most of the girls are prone to the issue of child marriage at a very early age. This makes them to stay away from the education and are compelled to take the responsibilities of the household.

Poverty – Poverty is one of the factors which is responsible for the declining sex ratio. States like Tamil Nadu have a high sex ratio but the poverty rate is low. There are states wherein due to poverty, a lot of girls are denied of nutritious food. This deprives the women and girl child from a living a healthy life.

Social status of women – In most parts of India, women are merely considered as an object. People are worried about the dowry issue with the birth of a girl child. Due to financial problem, most of the families in rural areas prefer male child over female.

Lack of empowerment of women - There is a lack of empowerment of women especially in the rural areas. Women do not enjoy opportunities as men do. Due to lack of education, women are unable to establish their roles in many places. The state of Uttar Pradesh has become like a grave for girls.

Male domination – Majority of the places in India follows the patriarchal system. In India, males are considered to be the only bread earners. The methods of sex determination and female foeticide are adopted which is main reason of declining number of females especially in North India.

Infant and Maternal Mortality – Infant mortality rate is the number of death of babies before the age of one. Due to female foeticide, the sex ratio declines terribly. Maternal mortality also contributes to the declining sex ratio as most of the women die during the childbirth due to improper care and less facilities.

Similarly, the neglect of girl child and low child sex ratio are son preference and the belief that it is only the son who can perform the last rites, that its lineage and inheritance run through the male line, sons will look after parents in old age men are bread winners etc.

A.K Sen argued that the disparity in sex ratio across eastern Asian countries like India, China and Korea when compare to North America and Europe as seen in 1992, could only be explained by deliberate nutritional and health deprivation against women and female children. These deprivations are caused by cultural mechanisms such as traditions, values that vary across countries and even regionally within countries.

Sen suggests that in areas with high proportions of missing women the care and nutrition female children receive are tied to the community's view of their importance. Parents even mothers, often avoid daughters because of the traditional patriarchal culture in countries where the elimination of females takes place.

Various researchers argue that declining fertility contributes to an intensified problem of missing women. This is because families have a preference for sons a decrease in fertility would mean that families would no longer have children of multiple sexes, but rather a single male child.

Anderson and ray in their study in 2008 claim that other diseases may explain the excess female mortality across Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. They find that 37 to 45 per cent of missing women in China can be traced to pre-birth and infancy stage termination factors, whereas only around 11 per cent of India's missing women were caused by cardiovascular disease.

Besides, evidence has shown that number of missing women may be due to other reasons than sex selective abortion like female babies, girls and women have been preyed upon by human traffickers.

ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES

A recent report from the NITI Aayog said sex ratio at birth (SRB) nationwide had dropped from 906 in 2012-2014 to 900 in 2013-2015. The SRB is the number of girls born for every 1,000 boys. In all, 17 of 21 large Indian States saw a drop in the SRB, with Gujarat performing the worst, declining 53 points. While the NITI Aayog report used data up to 2013-15, newer data from India's Sample Registration System show the SRB fell even further in 2014-2016, from 900 to 898. While this is a highly disturbing trend, it



Cover Page



isn't new for India, which has seen a consistent lowering of the SRB since the 1970s. In natural circumstances, the SRB hovers around 952 girls for every 1,000 boys.

The number of girls born is naturally lower than the number of boys, and demographers speculate that this may be nature's way of offsetting the higher risk that men have of dying — male babies are biologically weaker than females, and men have historically seen higher mortality rates owing to risk-taking behaviour and participation in wars. This evens out the sex ratio of a population as it grows older. But India is a special case. Its SRB is far lower than 952 because of the preference for the male child.

This means we are killing girl children in the womb. As on today, around 63 million girls are estimated to be 'missing' in India because of such actions.

Many researchers have also highlighted that in the mid-1990s a reverse began in the observed trends in the regions of Asia where originally the male female ratios were high. Some of the adverse consequences are as follows.

The neglect and discrimination of female is not just affecting girls or women, it also has the effects on men's health. As pregnant women suffer from nutritional neglect the fetus suffers, leading to low birth weight for male as well as female babies.

Again, some have speculated that the disparity in the sex ratio may affect the marriage market in such a way that may turn the tide of missing women.

The advent of sex-selective abortions via ultrasound and other medical procedures in the 1980s, the gender discrimination that have caused the missing women have simultaneously produced cohorts of excess men. The group of excess men would cause social disturbances such as crime and abnormal sexual behaviours without the opportunity to marry.

POLICY MEASURES

As for tackling the demand side – i.e. addressing the complex reasons that son preference-daughter aversion is so prevalent – our policy response has included marking the National Girl Child Day (declared in 2009) on January 24, sporadically putting up billboards at major intersections telling us to 'love the girl child,' 'beti bachao,' 'stop killing girls', and a slew of ill-conceived conditional cash transfer schemes to incentivise the birth of girls at both the Centre and the State level. A 2010 desk review of 15 conditional cash transfer schemes (Dhan Lakshmi, Ladli, Beti Hai Anmol, Kanyadan, and others) conducted by TV Sekher of MPS for UNFPA is revealing.

Most of them promised relatively small amounts at maturity, had complex conditions (immunisation, school enrolment, institutional delivery, sterilisation, among others), gave cash amounts at the age of 18 (for dowry), and were aimed at poor or BPL families.

Quite apart from the objectionable attempt to arm twist every imaginable kind of 'desired' behaviour (immunise, educate, sterilise) in return for small sums of money, the big problem is that these schemes are targeted largely at poor families.

This is not a poor or BPL-only phenomenon. Small cash amounts are unlikely to make an iota of difference to families who have resources to pay for sex selective technology. On this issue, Indian policymakers, accustomed to 'targeting' the poor (i.e., BPL) need to bravely enter the unfamiliar terrain of targeting the not-so-poor, the upwardly mobile, and the wealthy.

The advocacy and communications around this issue, by both the government and NGOs, has taken the 'love the girl child' route. It is unexceptionable, politically correct, and ensconced comfortably in a language of patriarchal protectiveness (ladki ko bachao). Of course, everyone likes to 'love little girls in pigtails,' including MPs who will defeat the Women's Reservation Bill time and again in Parliament.

The patterns of missing women are not uniform in all states of India as well as all parts of developing nations. Studies also find large variations between missing women. There is an excess of women in Sub-Saharan Africa rather than deficit i.e., the ratio of women to men is 1.02. Similarly, there are disproportionately large numbers of missing women in India and China. The prevalence of missing women is often intertwined with a society's culture and history and as a result, it is difficult to create broad policy measures.



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2021/10.09.29>

Census report in India 2001 finds that women increased educational attainment was associated with the rise in the female to male sex ratio in India. It was observed that in families where females are highly educated, have many brothers, are close in age to their husbands, women tend to be more well-off, leading to lower counts of missing women.

Again, it can be suggested that a women’s opportunity to participate in the labor force affords her more bargaining power within home. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, where there are fewer missing women, a woman is generally able to earn income from outside the home, increasing her contributions to her households or family and contributing to a different overall view of the value of women compared to that of South East and East Asian Countries.

At present, several international and independent organisations have taken measures to attempt to help the problem. The OECD includes missing women as a measure under the son preference parameter of its social inclusion and gender index, bringing awareness to it as an issue. Again, the 1989 convention on the Rights of the Child noted the importance of children in measuring a society’s level of equality, while the fourth UN Conference for women in 1995 developed the Beijing platform, which recognised the rights of the female child.

Lastly, it can be suggested that empowerment of is the main solution of avoiding missing women. Economic empowerment of women not only makes women independent but also helps in developing a healthy society for women.

REFERENCES

1. **Sen, A (2003)** “Missing women revisited: reduction in female mortality has been counterbalance by sex selective abortions” British Medical Journal, 327.(7427):1297-1299
2. **Sen, A (1992)** “Missing Women” BMJ: British Medical Journal, 304 (6827);587-588
3. **Guilmoto, C.Z (2010)** “Skewed Sex Ratios at birth and future marriage squeeze in China and India, 2005-2010” Demography. 49 (1):77-100
4. **Guilmoto, C.Z (2009)** “The sex Ratio transition in Asia” CEPED working paper, 5. Retrieved 2009-11-19.
5. **Statistical Handbook of Assam (2011)**, Government of Assam.
6. **The Indian Express**, November 4, 2017.