



Sex Ratio in Punjab: A Geographical Study

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Sex Ratio in Punjab: A Geographical Study ABSTRACT Sex Ratio is one of the social indicators which depict the status of women. Imbalanced sex ratio has drawn serious attention only in the after math of 1977. When harsh measures were adopted to contain growing population under the family planning programmers.

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ABSTRACT

Sex Ratio is one of the social indicators which depict the status of women. Imbalanced sex ratio has drawn serious attention only in the after math of 1977. When harsh measures were adopted to contain growing population under the family planning programmers. One negative impact of the adoption of small family norms is that parents and society at large preferred male child. The task of the parents has been made easy by the new innovations in determining the sex of the fetus. This has replaced to a large extent infanticide with feoticide. The 2011 census reveals that the general sex ratio in India is stable during last 15 years which was 941 in 1961 and 940 in 2011. Government is taking many initiative in many states like in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi to improve this decline in sex ratio.

Present study is an attempt to examine the level and trends in the sex ratio in Punjab which has observed consistently low sex ratio over a century. The situation has worsened because of steep fail in CSR in the last census decade. The study also tried to reveal spatial variations, a various levels like district Sex ratio is one of the good indicator or a way to know the women status in the society and even socio-economic conditions of a region. If sex ratio of an area is understood then we can easily plan and comprehend demographic dynamism in terms of mortality, migration, economic characteristics, marital status etc.

KEYWORDS

Sex Ratio, Gender Discrimination, Female Feoticide, Population.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the 20th century and as evident from the last census, India has been witnessing a sharp decline in the sex ratio. Sex ratio in India is defined as the number of females per thousand male population unlike internationally where it is defined as the number of males per hundred population. The skewed sex ratio in India is mostly attributed to lower status of women, high mortality, illiteracy and economic backwardness.

In spite of being one of the most progressive and prosperous state with high per capita income and 70 percent literacy, Punjab is facing a situation of sex ratio imbalance with strong preference of sons which is least expected from a state which boast for its rich culture, heritage and social values.

Review of Literature

Many demographers and economists have tried to highlight the causes for gender discrimination and the resulting imbalance in the sex ratio.

- According to **Kundu and Sahu** (1991) decreasing sex ratio is because migration of males from other countries and sex selective abortions also contribute to declining sex ratio in the country.
- **Sudha and Rajan** (1998) have suggested that prenatal sex determination, neglect of girls and female feticide are the factors which have resulted in adverse sex ratio observed in the 1991 census.?
- **Dhillon and Bhullar** (2003) have found that preference for sons is due to their economic utility in agriculture, for carrying on the family line, to provide social security in the old age.

Objectives

- To study the pattern of district level of sex ratio
- To understand the operative factors responsible for gender discrimination.
- To suggest the improvement of sex ratio.

Database and Methodology

The present study is based on the secondary data obtained from the variety of authentic government sources. Some of the data is available in the published form while remaining is downloaded from the official websites of the government offices from the internet. The main sources of data are census publications, various books, research papers in the journals, Statistical Abstract of Punjab.

Study Area

The state of Punjab is a part of the world's first and oldest civilization. The Indus valley civilization. It is a land of rivers, fertile soils and steady achievement. Punjab is situated in northwest India between 29°30' N to 32°32' N latitude and 73°55' E to 76°50' E longitude. It is bordered by Pakistan on the west, and by four Indian states - Jammu and Kashmir on the north, Himachal Pradesh on its northeast and Haryana and Rajasthan on its south. Punjab occupies 1.54% of the country's total geographical area (50,362 square kilometers).

However, because of its critical position in northwest India, the state historically served as gateway of India – a prosperous destination for many outsiders.

Administrative Map of Punjab



(Source : www.mapsofindia.com)

Sex Ratio

The one of the most important demographic feature of human population is its sex composition which should be always balanced otherwise the very survival of mankind is in danger.

It is very difficult to understand that expectation of life of women is increasing but their number is decreasing. Punjab, the gender composition (the number of females per thousand males) is still quite poor due to prevalent social and cultural factors. Punjab is the state with second lowest sex ratio (874 females per thousand males) and is much below the national average (933 females per thousand males).

From 1901 to 2011 sex ratio in Punjab is quite less as compared to the national average. In 1911 Punjab sex ratio is 780 but in 2011 after 100 years sex ratio increases to 895 but still it is less than India's sex ratio i.e. 943 in 2011.

Sex Ratio in Different years

| Year | Punjab | India |
|------|--------|-------|
| 1901 | 832 | 972 |
| 1911 | 780 | 964 |
| 1921 | 799 | 955 |
| 1931 | 815 | 950 |
| 1941 | 836 | 945 |
| 1951 | 844 | 946 |
| 1961 | 854 | 941 |
| 1971 | 865 | 930 |
| 1981 | 879 | 934 |
| 1991 | 882 | 927 |
| 2001 | 874 | 933 |
| 2011 | 895 | 943 |

(Source : *Census of India 2011*)

Child (0-6) Sex Ratio in Different Years

| Year | Punjab | India |
|------|--------|-------|
| 1961 | 901 | 976 |
| 1971 | 901 | 964 |
| 1981 | 908 | 962 |
| 1991 | 875 | 945 |
| 2001 | 793 | 927 |
| 2011 | 846 | 919 |

(Source : Census of India 2011)

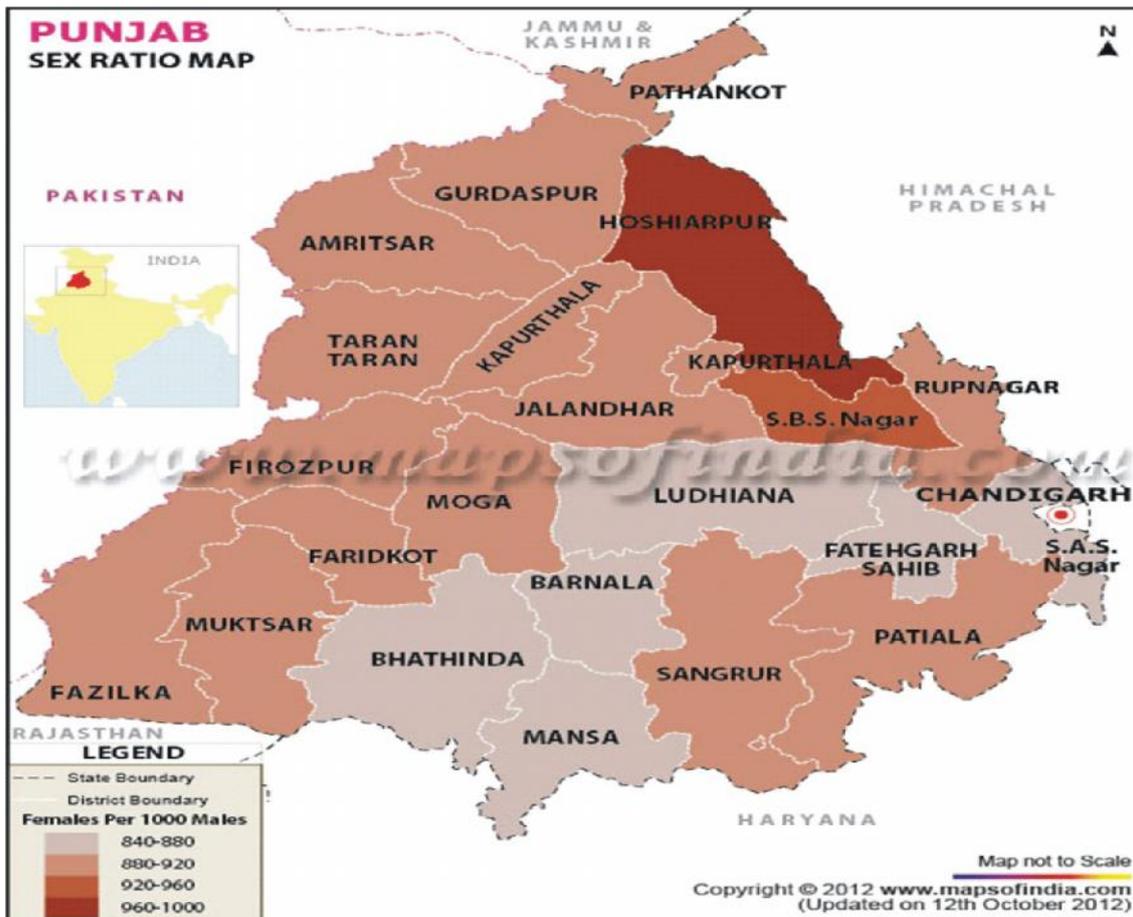
The number of female foeticide cases is the highest in Punjab. Distinction of being the worst state in the country in term of child sex ratio out of ten districts in country with least child sex ratio. Seven are from Punjab itself including Fatehgar Sahib which recorded lowest ratio of 754 in the country.

The above table shows a comparison of child sex Ratio in India & Punjab. In Punjab lowest child sex ratio is 793 in 2001 & highest is 908 in 1981, whereas in India lowest child sex ratio is 919 in 2011 & highest is 976 in 1961. The table also shows that when we talk about sex ratio in India from the year 1961 to 2011, the number has fallen from 976 to 919, whereas in Punjab there was a decline in sex ratio from 1961 to 2001 but it eventually increased from the year 2001 to 2011.

Comparative study on Sex Ratio in different districts of Punjab (1991-2011)

| Districts | 1991 | 2001 | 2011 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|
| Amritsar | 873 | 874 | 884 |
| Barnala | - | 907 | 876 |
| Bhatinda | 884 | 865 | 865 |
| Faridkot | 883 | 881 | 889 |
| Fatehgarh Sahib | 871 | 851 | 871 |
| Ferozepur | 895 | 883 | 893 |
| Gurdaspur | 903 | 888 | 895 |
| Hoshiarpur | 924 | 935 | 962 |
| Jalandhar | 897 | 882 | 913 |
| Kapurthala | 896 | 886 | 912 |
| Ludhiana | 844 | 824 | 869 |
| Mansa | 873 | 875 | 880 |
| Moga | 884 | 883 | 893 |
| Muktsar | 880 | 886 | 895 |
| Nawanshehar | 900 | 913 | 915 |
| Patiala | 882 | 864 | 888 |
| Roopnagar | 872 | 870 | 913 |
| Sangrur | 872 | 868 | 883 |
| Sas Nagar | - | 840 | 954 |
| Tarntaran | - | 887 | 898 |

(Source: Economic and Statistical Organization, Punjab, Director, Census Operations, Punjab)



(Source : www.mapsofindia.com)

- Among all districts in the State, Hoshiarpur has the highest sex ratio i.e. 962 according to 2011 census.
- Doaba region (Jalandhar, Hosiarpur, Kapurthala, Sasnagar, Nawashera and Rupnagar districts) of the state are the top ranking districts in terms of sex ratio where the range of Sex Ratio is between 912 to 962.
- The district with lowest sex ratio was Bathinda (865) which is close to the sex ratio of Delhi (866).
- South region of Punjab (Bhatinda, Mansa, Barnala, Faridkote, Gurudaspur, Ludhiana and Patiala) has the lowest ranking in terms of sex ratio where range is in between 865 to 895.

Gender Discrimination

The most important reason which is not talked about for the neglect of the girl child is that Punjabi society attaches too much of “izzat” (honour) with the name of their daughter whereas their sons are free to indulge in any kind of anti-social activities. The fresh cases of deserted married girls by their NRI husbands for their vested interests as reported in the media are eye openers for the society, social organization and the state.

The women neither seems to be safe at homes where they face problems like dowry seeking and sexual harassment. According to UNICEF (1999) the girls in India are discriminated in the form of less medical help in case they fall sick, no special food and very little parental attention.

The preference of sons in the society is to an extent that people detect the sex of the fetus by collecting the blood sample of the expecting mother that contains DNA of the baby which is then sent outside the country through post and the result is sent via email that has led to the misuse of advanced technology.

People are so obsessed with the desire to have male child that they do not hesitate to interfere in the natural biological phenomenon.

Major factors responsible for female disadvantage and male preference are deep-rooted “Gender Ideology” embedded within this very old and traditional social system and institutions governed by patriarchy and Patri-lineage.

Some of the major factors derived from the ideology, values and beliefs are:

- Sons (males) as old parental security.
- Propagation of family lineage through sons (males).
- Religious beliefs giving rise to rights and duties of sons.
- Kinship network and cultural traditions.
- Agro-economic factors.

Steps to improve sex ratio

- **Balri Rakshak Yojana:** Objective of this scheme is to improve skewed sex ratio to stabilize population of the state and to reduce Infant Mortality Rate.
- **Awareness programme for improving adverse sex ratio (ACA 2606-07):** The people of Punjab have set mindset for male child to inherit their feudal property to look after them in the old age and provide a source of livelihood for the family. In order to curb the tendency of female foeticide and to improve the imbalance sex ratio in the state, which are 874 against 1000 male. The Department of Social Welfare shall create awareness among the masses through camps, organized at district and block level regarding serious adverse implications of gender imbalance in the society.
- **Social Security to the Girl Child (Kanya Jagriti Jyoti Scheme):** Kanya Jagriti Jyoti Scheme was launched in 1996-97 in Punjab State. The main objective of the scheme is to uplift the social status of girls and to reduce school dropout rate. The girls born on or after 26.1.1996 in the families living below poverty line i.e. with annual income below Rs. 20,000/- are covered under this scheme. The family of the beneficiary is required to adopt two child family norms and only one child will be covered under the scheme.
- The Beti Bachao and Beti Badhao programme (save the girl child and educate her) is a programme of women and child development ministry, Government of India. The aim of this programme is to address the issue of decline in child sex-ratio.
- Some NGOs are work against gender discrimination in Punjabi society for example Uphar Coordination Society Panghura Scheme “Bajjar Kurahit” (Unpardonable Sin) Nanhi Shan”, “Rukh Te Kukh” (Womb and Plants).

CONCLUSION

It is concluded from the results that gender disparity is higher in some of the districts but in some developed districts of Punjab, there is successive decrease in gender disparity as compared to Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Therefore, by enforcement of government rules, policies and along with that general awareness of people can reduce this difference. Therefore, continued monitoring of Sex Ratio can be of help in formulating and implementing policies to overcome the Adverseness in the Sex Ratio.

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