

PREFACE

Sex ratio imbalance is a complex phenomenon in most societies of the world. All the developmental processes are playing very crucial roles in changing the ratio of males and females in different ways, and at significant levels in developed and developing countries, states, and regions. Declining sex ratio is a reflection of the existing gender discrimination in Indian society. The Indian patriarchal system, demands of various institutions such as religion, family etc., and socio-cultural practices are directly or indirectly, positively or negatively, related and affecting the sex ratio. Also use of advanced medical technologies and their unethical practices, and violation of the medical laws such as MTP (Medical Termination of Pregnancy) and PNDT (Prenatal Diagnostic Test) are contributing to declining sex ratio in Indian society. However, the changing or declining sex ratio indicates the real status of women in Gujarat and other parts of India where sex ratio is low. Declining sex Ratio refers to a situation where males outnumber females. Sex ratio is an important social indicator to measure the extent of prevailing equity between males and females, and gender discrimination in a society at a given point of time. In our society, this burning issue is undertaken seriously and is addressed by the sociologists, researchers, various stakeholders, government agencies and various NGOs because of the severe negative implications of the problem which confronts our Indian society. A good number of problem based studies have already been carried out and presently some studies are going on in various regions and areas of the country including north, south, central and eastern belts. Available literature on the problem highlighted that very few studies have been undertaken on the present issue, in the western region of India, especially Gujarat region.

Gujarat can be considered as one of the developed states of India. Despite of this status, the census data reveals a shocking picture of Gujarat with respect to skewed sex ratio or declining sex ratio. Socio cultural factors are directly or indirectly

attributing for the problem of skewed sex ratio in India. Intense preference for son is one of the important factors responsible for the problem of declining sex ratio in our society. Majority of the parents have a strong desire for male child because parents feel that if they will have son he will support them economically in old age. Son also brings dowry in Indian society. In patriarchal society like India it is said that son is responsible for continuation of family line or genealogy. As per the conventions among Hindus the performance of funeral rite is performed by the son therefore there is desire for son. Many parents in India believe that their life is incomplete if they do not produce a male child. All these factors together are responsible for the preference of male child against female child. These factors directly or indirectly affect the society negatively in many ways, like decreasing the numbers of females in society will result in reducing the status of women, increase crimes against women and also gender related problems will increase. This situation raises several questions related to identification of various factors or reasons which are contributing to this problem along with its negative implications in the Gujarat state in particular. There is also the need to identify and highlight various other related issues which are associated with the problem of declining sex ratio in the Gujarat state.

Thus, the above framework or perspective has made the researcher to undertake the present primary research in order to make an effort to try and find out the answers to the aforesaid issues. Hopefully the present research will definitely add to the existing body of knowledge in the field of medical sociology. The findings of the present study will definitely help the policy makers to frame policies and programmes in such ways whereby the existing problem can be resolved in Gujarat region in particular and India in general.

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