

AN ANALYSIS OF GENDER BIAS IN SOCIETY: A CASE STUDY OF VILLAGE KANALAH, DHANSAL DISTRICT JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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ABSTRACT

Children are preferred everywhere in the world. Various studies have been done by the researchers related to this issue which shows different reasons for demand for having children. Son preference in the household has a serious impact on the demand for additional children in the family. In developing nations like India demand for son is more than the developed nations. Educational status of the people also has an impact on the demand for children. Educated people prefer few children with good qualities. Women are among the most vulnerable section of the society as they are deprived from basic education and also deprived from the decision making powers. At the same time, decision making power of women play crucial role in case of demand for children. Economic factors also affect this demand. Son preference is deeply rooted in patriarchal cultural and religious beliefs that uphold the essential value of having a son in a family. Sex Ratio in Jammu and Kashmir is 889, which is below national average of 940 as per census 2011. In 2001, the sex ratio was 900 per 1000 males. High demand for son and sex selective abortion is the major cause of declining sex ratio in the state. This situation of women and girl child intends us to study this issue to find out the factors responsible for this gender bias. This study may add some new findings in the existing literature which can tell the reasons responsible for these streak inequalities present in the society.

Keywords: Gender, Child, Sex ratio, Society, Census, Jammu & Kashmir

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INTRODUCTION

The status of women and children is almost the same in all the states and union territories where male dominate and female are accorded low status. Although in Indian culture it is the prime duty of a man to protect the child and women but sadly this social ethic is not conformed in actual practice. At current fertility levels, a woman in Jammu and Kashmir will have an average of 2.4 children in her life-time, somewhat higher than the replacement level

of fertility. Fertility decreased by 0.3 children in the seven years between NFHS-2 and NFHS-3. Fertility in rural areas is 2.7 children per woman, about one child higher than in urban areas where the fertility rate of 1.6 children per woman is much lower than the replacement level.

Children bring happiness to the family. There are many other reasons for which children are demanded in a family like old age security, future economic gains, emotional support etc. Different people have

different reason for demanding children in their family. Demand for children depend upon certain characteristics such as education of parent, their economic status or if parents had not completed their ideal family size etc. Literature suggests that future economic gain from the children and old age security are the main reasons behind demand for the children. Particularly, demand for children depends upon the household income, on the cost (price) of children, and on parent's tastes or preferences for children. The supply of children reflects two factors: a couple's natural fertility and the chances of child survival. Natural fertility refers to the number of births a couple would have if they took no action aimed at limiting fertility behaviour. Child survival refers to the number of children surviving to adulthood. Literature suggests that supply varies inversely

with the level of mortality. Hence, reductions in mortality increase the supply of children.

As far as education is concerned, at current fertility rates, women with no education will have one child more than women with 10 or more years of schooling (TFR = 3.3, compared with TFR = 2.0). It shows an indirect relationship between educational level and fertility level. Similarly, women in the second wealth quintile will have almost two children more than women in the highest wealth quintile. The states like Bihar, UP, Nagaland have above 3.6 fertility level, whereas there are many developed states which have 1.5 fertility level like Tamil Nadu, Goa, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi. Table 1 shows states according to their Total Fertility rates as per NFHS-3.

Table-1: States Classified by level of Total Fertility Rate

Fertility Level (TFR)	States
Replacement or below replacement (10 states with 35% India's population).	Tamil Nadu, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Sikkim, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi.
Between 2.1 and 2.4 (6 states with 20% India's Population).	Tripura, West Bengal, Orissa, Gujarat, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir.
Between 2.5 and 3.6 (9 states with 19% India's Population).	Uttaranchal, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, MP, Rajasthan, Jarkhand.
Above 3.6 (4 states with 25% India's population).	Nagaland, Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar.

Source: National Family Health Survey-3 (2005)

In case of Jammu and Kashmir son preference has been found according to National Family Health Survey. About one in four women and men want more sons than daughters, but only 2-3 percent wants more daughters than sons. However, most men and women would like to have at least one son

and most would like to have at least one daughter. The desire for more children is also affected by women number of sons. For example, among currently married women with two children, 83-85 percent of women with one or two sons want no more children, compared with only 39 percent of

women with two daughters and no sons. Notably, however, the proportion of currently married women with two children who want no more children is higher in NFHS-3 (78%) than it was in NFHS-2 (64%), irrespective of women's number of sons.

One of the major causes of son preference in India is related to the perceived economic utility of having sons. Compared to daughters, sons provide help in family farm and business. They have better earnings prospects in the labour market and provide security to their parents during old age. Additionally sons provide the continuation of family name and also there is a custom in Hinduism which dictates that only son can perform the funeral rituals of parents. This shows the impact of culture on the demand for having son. Daughters are considered as liabilities because of the tradition of dowry. Families do not have the same incentives to invest in the education of their daughters as they do with the sons because of a feeling that daughters will leave their parental homes and live with their husband and in laws. Sex related abortions have increased even though such acts are considered illegal in India. Sex selective abortions have increased especially when first born child is daughter which shows a strong son preference in the society. In order to have son women have to face multiple pregnancies, abortions and infanticides. Multiple children bearing affect the health of women, many of whom are undernourished and suffer of anaemia. The low status of women and patriarchal values are intensifying this

trend in India. Son preference showed serious negative effect on women health, fertility choice and future wellbeing of girl as child. Policymakers need to take into consideration the complex interplay of economies, religion, tradition, customs and inferior status of women among the highly diverse states in India in order to address this grave issue.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find out the relationship between education level of parents and number of children demanded.
- To study the behaviour of society towards gender bias.

HYPOTHESES

- With the increase in educational attainment of women, the demand for children reduces.
- Social structure is responsible for gender bias in the society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

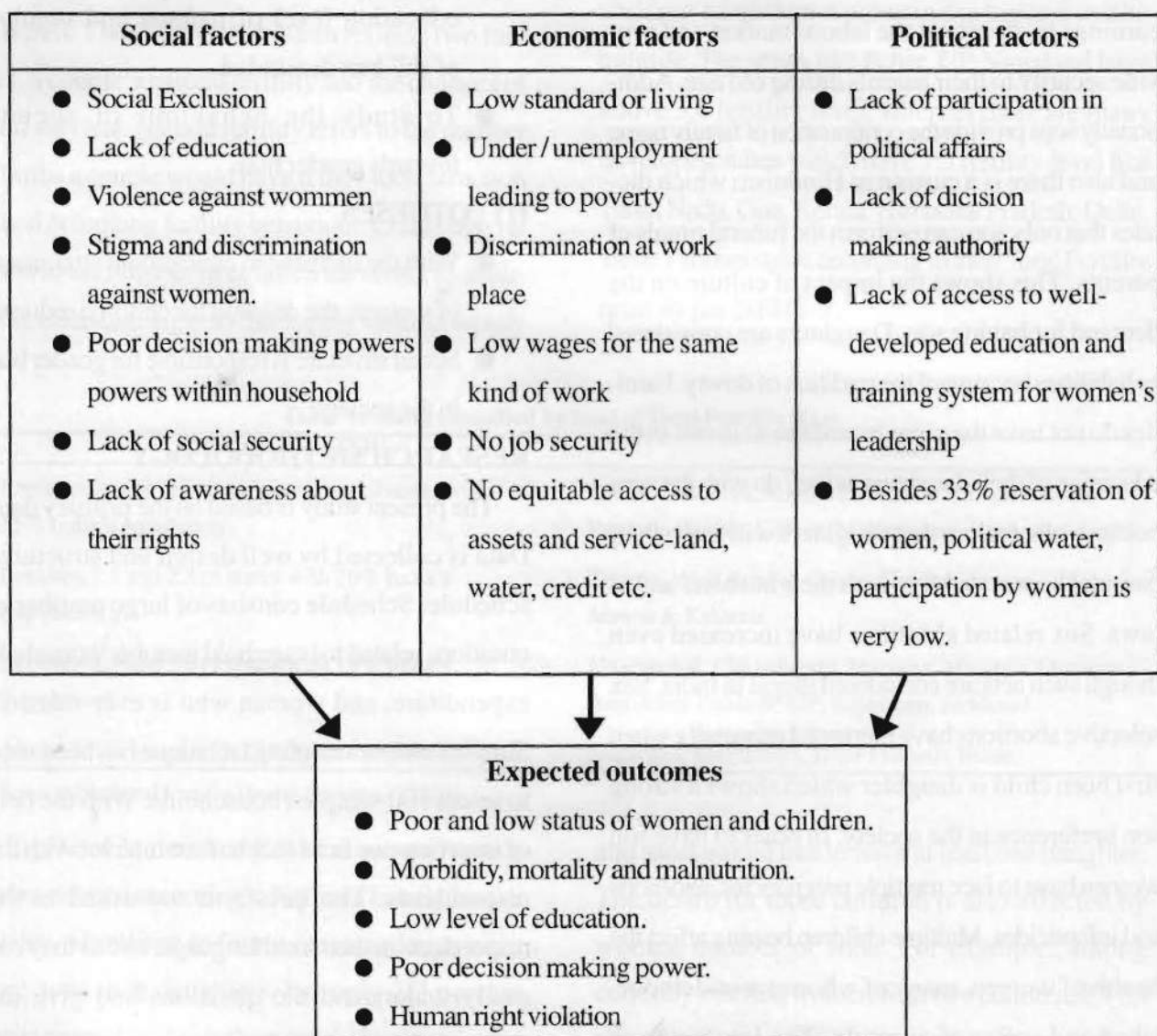
The present study is based on the primary data. Data is collected by well design and structured schedule. Schedule consists of large number of questions related to household member, household expenditure, and woman who is ever married. Simple random sampling technique has been used to select 100 sampled households. With the help of interview we hold face to face interact with the respondents. The questions are asked to the respondents in their local language, so that they can easily understand the questions and give the appropriate answer. Then appropriate statistical tool is used to fulfil the objectives.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Human development is the ultimate goal of all our developmental efforts, empowerment of women and development of children gains priority on the country's development agenda. Women and Children together constitute 65.6 per cent of the country's total population and account for 673.80

million (as projected) in 2001. Development of women has been receiving attention of the Government right from the very First Plan (1951-56). But, the same has been treated as a subject of 'welfare' and clubbed together with the welfare of the disadvantaged groups like destitute, disabled, aged, etc. Let's have a look on major components affecting women and child development.

MAJOR COMPONENTS AFFECTING WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT



Source: Author's own creation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Education is one of those important characteristics which show its impact on the life of a person at different levels. With the level of education the attitude and behaviour of a particular person changes with the passage of time. Data reveals that significant amount of population had achieved an educational attainment between 9th to 12th standard. Along with this also we found some graduates and post graduates. Not any female found to be post graduated. If we go by sex composition then literacy rate found to be higher for males as compared to females. Illiteracy among women found to be more than men i.e. around 23.1% of women found to be illiterate as compared to 3.5% of men. It shows that females have less access to education only upto higher secondary level. Merely around 5.4% women reach graduation level and 1.2% reaches at PG level but now the trend has changed parents prefer to give quality education to all of their children. Education to female child is equally important as it is important for male child. But our society still suffers from some traditional beliefs. In modern world these old beliefs need to be changed if we want to give women a better place to live in. Let's have a look on the various reasons for a couple to have children. In our socialistic pattern of society couple need children for so many reasons. Some of the reasons we had figured out like old age security, future economic gain, procreation, emotional support and for performing last rites etc. Majority of the women preferred to

have children because of an old age security. Around 54.9% of women believe that couple need children for their old age security. In this case we found the result opposite to our expectations. In a country like India where people follow traditional values now no longer believe that they need children for performing their last rites, a very insignificant proportion of women favoured this argument.

Majority of the women i.e. around 71.4% replied that in today's world of high prices it's very hard for the family to bear the marriage expenditure of girl child. And the dowry practise added fuel to the fire. Now Government had started some programmes to give better and safe environment to the girl child. Only around 28.6% women think insecurity of women as a reason behind considering girl child as a burden. But overall on the basis of response rate towards this we can say that women no longer consider girl child as a burden which is a good sign for the society. It means that a ray of hope is there for the better future of the girl child. Almost in all the cases majority women replied that there shouldn't be any preference for male child. Woman of any age favoured this argument. In case of educational attainment of women, around 50% women having education upto 8th standard and graduation believe that male child is must for the family and there should be preference for male child. Illiterate and less educated women did show preference for boys but with education women showed a significant change in their perception related to boys and girls preference. Almost every respondent wants fewer

but quality children irrespective of their age, education, religion, caste, occupation and standard of life index. Around 98 percent of the women do believe that it is better to have less but quality children as compare to quantity. Overall around 2% of women replied that they can't say anything about it. This shows that now in today's world of high prices people prefer less child so that they can fulfil all the basic needs of their children. This is rather more important in case of children. Even they can take care of fewer children much better as compared to more children to be cared of. Thus, with the passage of time along with other social changes in the society, the attitude of women towards this issue also showed a change.

Majority of the women from Hindu religion opposed this argument and Muslim women replied that they can't say whether this preference must be there or not. Majority of the women from all categories believe that there should not be any preference. Overall we can say that majority women replied that this gender bias must not be there and boys and girls must be treated equally.

Majority of the women i.e. around 72.5 % do believe that society is responsible for this. Social beliefs of traditional Indian society are such that they give more preference to male child as compared to females. If we want to give better opportunities to our daughters then this construct of Indian social structure need to be changed. No doubt with the passage of time this is changing but still we have found more preference for male child in the society.

In today's world women are showing excellence almost in every sphere of life and they are no longer behind men. Women, of any age group, religion, caste, either educated or uneducated do favour this argument.

Around 66.7% respondents between age group 20-29, preferred male child for the old age security. In case of 30 plus women majority of them want son for future economic gain. Among illiterates, both old age security and economic gain preferred by 33.3% of the respondents each. In another case women who were educated preferred son for getting economic gain in future. In case of religion, majority of the respondents from the Hindu community preferred son for the future economic gains. Muslim respondents showed different attitude towards this. As these women preferred son for different reasons like procreation, emotional support and for performing last rites.

CONCLUSION

Household demand for children varies from families to families. The demand for children at a household level is considered to be significant as far as the economic and social contribution is concerned. Education status of the people also has an impact on the demand for children. Educated people prefer few children with good qualities. Women are among the most vulnerable section of the society as they are deprived from basic education and also deprived from the decision making powers. Decision making power of women can play crucial role in case of demand for children. Thus, we can

conclude that gender mainstreaming must exist in the policy so that programs can be started for the upliftment of the female child. More strict laws must be made against evils like dowry system so that perception of people regarding female child as burden can be changed. Education facilities need to be improved then only gender bias from the society can be removed. Increase in education level of the women leads to the decrease in the demand for more children in a household. Equal opportunities should be provided to both male as well as female in every aspect of life.

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