

Trends of Gender Differentials in India: A Socio-Economic and Demographic Analysis

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 10 October 2018

Keywords

Population, socio-economic, demographic and health

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ABSTRACT

“When women thrive, all of society benefits, and succeeding generations are given a better start in life” -Kofi Annan

Generally, population enumerated based on gender basis and dichotomised as males and females. Population in terms of gender composition is a key indicator to monitor the development pulse of a country. The prevailing patriarchal society creates a gender imbalance by viewing the male as an asset and the female as a liability for the family. However, the important aspect of social lives now-a-days is mostly confined to the gender issues in various socio-economic, demographic and health aspects of people in India. Atrocities on females of any age are the regular feature in our social, political and cultural lives. Unfortunately females are in a historical process neglected at the helm of men dominated society. This feature is perhaps still persisted in the recent period, albeit the extent may be different. In the present context, this study tries to investigate some of the important classifications in regard to the extent and variation of gender issues in a process of a trend persist. The study analyzing the data based on censuses, Sample Registration System, and Family welfare statistics of India for various years, enlightens some pertinent feature in this respect. The study shows some favouritism in respect of males and in a trend process it persists.

1. Introduction

“Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace” propagated at Beijing platform for Action- **(UN Fourth Conference on Women)**.

In ancient periods, women consider as goddess of Lakshmi who stands for wealth, had higher status and played a vital role in social-cultural aspects of family and society in India. In contrast, however, changes in family and society, the role and status of women had been gradually declined, worsen and discriminated. Moreover, the prevailing patriarchal society creates a gender imbalance by viewing the male as an asset and the female as a liability for the family. Therefore, over a period of time, gender inequalities prevail in many aspects of India. But, constitution of India provides equality to women and also empowers the state to adopt measures in favour of women to upgrade them from their disadvantage status in terms of many spheres such as socio-economic, education and political scenario. Many articles of Indian constitution such as 14, 15, 15 (3), 16, 39 (a), 39 (b), 39 (d), 39 (A), 42, 46, 47, 51 (A) (e), 243 D (3), 243 D (4), 243 T (3), 243 T (4) are of special provisions to safeguard citizen from any discrimination (C.S.O, 2005). Though, the constitution guarantees to all citizens equality of status, opportunity and article 15 expressly “prohibits any discrimination” (UN, 1982), women in India still receive less status and position than men in many dimensions and pointed out in studies also (Dasgupta,1987; Ghosh, 1987; Mukhopadhyay, 1996). Also, Nelson and Bridges (1999) speak of “inequality/wage gap in gender” in American society. Rives

and Yousafi (1997) had argued that, “evidence of gender inequality remains prevalent throughout the world.

To safeguard women, the constitution, the states has enacted many legislative measures for the betterment of its citizen through equal rights. But, all laws are not gender specific. Therefore, some amendments are made from time to time to have special provisions to safeguard women, such as ‘The employees state Insurance Act 1951, The Family Court Act 1954, The special Marriage Act 1954, The Hindu Succession Act 1956, The Maternity Benefit Act 1961 (amended in 1995), The Equal Remuneration Act 1976, Nitbhaya Act,2013 and so on (C.S.O., 2005). Apart from these, some specific programmes (such as National Commission for Women, 1992; Reservation for Women in Local-Self Government through 73rd & 74th Amendment of the Constitution, 1992; The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child:1991-2000 and National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001) have been initiated by The Government to ensure advancement, development and empowerment of women. In spite of these efforts in India, females have been discriminated in many aspects and varied than males in the aspects of development indices.

2. Importance

In recent decades, with emerging of industrialization, urbanisation, commercialization and introduction of new technologies causes to modernisation, thereby changes in socio-economic and cultural role as well as status of men, leads to high rate of gender variation in several aspects in India. It had created imbalance in socio-economic, cultural,

demographic, and health concerns, which in-turn leads to numerous causes and consequences. Therefore, differentials in gender issues, has always been of topical interest for the demographers, social scientists, women’s groups researchers, and many other experts of various fields. Hence, the study of emerging differentials on various gender aspects is essential for policy formulation and effective planning of women empowerment.

3. Objective

In this paper, therefore, an attempt is made to examine the gender differential of the Indian population through some socio-economic demographic and health parameters. This paper is concentrated on the male-female differential regarding the literacy rate, work participation rate, labour force rate, sex ratio and health status aspects of the population over the years in India.

4. Methodology

In India, population census provides data on many aspects by residence, age and gender. The paper is based on secondary source of data, collected mainly from the censuses of India, Sample Register System, and Family Welfare Year Book etc over a period time. The gender differentials (Male-

Female Gap) are measured through the male-female rates of each aspect under study.

5. Results and Discussion

Gender difference aspects in India that considered in study are briefly discussed hereunder with possible reasons for variation.

Literacy Rate

Literacy level and educational attainment are vital indicators of development in a society. Literacy rate is considered to be key variable affecting demographic indicators. Higher literacy rate of females leads to greater awareness on the one hand and help family members and others in acquiring new skills. Mahatma Gandhi stated that” Educate one man, you can educate one person, but educate a women and you educate a whole civilisation. As per the 1991 census, a person aged seven and above, who can both read and write with understanding in any language, is treated as literate. Literacy rate is “the total percentage of the population of an area at a particular time aged seven years or above”. Table-1 provides data on effective literacy rates of males, females and gender gap in literacy rates.

Table-1: Literacy rates of India by gender

Literacy rate	Census Year						
	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Male	27.2	40.4	46.0	56.4	64.1	75.3	82.1
Female	8.9	15.4	22.0	29.8	39.3	53.7	65.5
Male- Female Gap	18.3	25	24	26.6	24.8	21.6	16.6

Source: Census of India, 2011.

Table-1 reveals that the literacy rate of males and females in 1951 was 27.2 percent and only 8.9 percent respectively. The corresponding figures in 2011 census were 82.1percent and 65.5 percent respectively. Thus, four out of every five males and two out of every three females in country are literates. Further, gap in male-female literacy rate was 18.3 percent in 1951, highest (26.6 percent) in 1986 and reduced to 16.6 percent in 2011. Though the target set for the year 2011-12 by planning commission of reducing the gap to 10.0 percent has not been achieved. The gap in literacy rates by gender can be due to socio-cultural aspects that are prevailing in India society, influence female literacy rate.

Work Participation Rate

Work Participation Rate in defined as “ the total number workers of all ages per 100 to total population in given area in a calendar year” Increasing the female labour force participation rate is a global concern and the G-20 countries have targeted to reduce the gender gap in these rates by 25 Percent by 2025.It has also been estimated by the G-20 group, that if the number of female workers were to increase to the same level as the number of men, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would expand by 5 percent in the United States, by 9 percent in Japan and by 27 percent in India. However, in modern India, industrial development, urbanization and modernization caused to shift in the occupational structure of the Indian workforce leads to gender differentials in labour force. Table-2 furnishes data on work participation rate in India.

Table-2: Work Participation Rate of India by Gender

Work Participation Rate	Census Year										
	1901	1911	1921	1931	1951*	1961	1971	1981#	1991#	2001	2011
Total	46.6	48.1	46.9	43.3	39.1	43.0	32.9	36.7	37.5	39.3	39.1
Male	61.1	61.9	60.5	58.3	54.0	57.1	52.5	52.6	51.6	51.9	51.7
Female	31.7	33.7	32.7	27.6	23.3	28.0	11.8	19.7	22.3	25.7	25.6
Male-Female Gap	29.4	28.2	27.8	30.7	30.7	29.1	40.7	32.9	29.3	26.2	26.1

Source: For data 1901-2001 from M.K. Premi, 2003: Social Demography-A systematically analysis, Jawahar Publishers, New Delhi and Census of India, 2011. (Note: *In 1951 census, the age group was 15-64; # Figures excludes Assam and Jammu and Kashmir).

Table-2 shows a gradual decline in the work participation rate over time. The work participation rate of India was 46.6

percent, declined to 43.0 percent in 1961 and further declined to 39.1 in 2011. The work participation rate in 1971 was lowest

for both males and females largely because of changes in definition, which become stringent in the latter census. Since, 1971, there has been improvement in the overall work participation rate because of improvement in data collection on women's activity. The male work participation rate has, however, continuously declined over the past forty years. This might be partly due to greater withdrawal of children from the work force in the recent past. The gender differentials in work participation rate was 29.4 per cent in 1901, rose to 32.9 percent in 1981 and reached to 26.1 percent in 2011. Thus, female work participation rates were nearly half in the male work participation rates. Women are generally engaged in household activities such as bearing and rearing of children and in the production of goods and services for self household consumption. Therefore, women's work at home remains unrecognized. Further, female work participation rate has been varied greatly because of concept that has been used in

census, the enumerator's efforts to net women's work along with socio-economic, demographic, cultural, political and other factors along with policies that creates hurdles to females in India, which prevents from work participation.

Labour Force

In recent periods, Governments have been implementing several schemes for providing employment opportunities especially for empowering women in India. Further, National Rural and Urban Livelihood Mission aims at enhance the skill potential of rural and urban women and make them employable. Reliable estimates of employment and unemployment are obtained through labour force surveys conducted by National Sample Surveys. Last survey was conducted during 2011-12. Table-3 contains data on labour force rate by residence and gender.

Table-3: Labour Force Rate of India by residence and gender

Work Participation by Residence	2004-5			2009-10			2011-12		
	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap
Total	54.7	28.7	26.0	54.6	22.8	31.8	54.4	21.9	32.5
Rural	54.6	32.7	21.9	54.7	26.1	28.6	54.3	24.8	29.5
Urban	54.9	16.6	38.3	54.3	13.8	40.5	54.6	14.7	39.9

Source: National Sample Surveys, 2004-12; M/O Statics and Programme Implementation, GOI.

Table-3 shows that in 2004-05, at National level the work participation rate of men was 54.7 percent, while women, 28.7 percent. The corresponding figures for rural were 54.6 percent and 32.7 percent respectively, whereas urban stands at 54.9 percent and 16.6 percent respectively. The gap in work participation rates at total, rural and urban were 26.0 percent, 21.9 percent and 38.3 percent respectively. By 2011-12, the work participation rates of men were same, while female labour force rates have been declined, while gender gaps were significantly increased during survey periods. Declining in female labour force rates especially in rural may be attributed to raise in the level of income in rural areas due to increase in real wages, and higher proportion of attending in education levels etc (Government of India, 2015).

It is an important social indicator to measure the extent of prevailing equality between males and females in a society at a given point of time. India is a patriarchal society that therefore, sex ratio is always unfavourable for women in country. In recent decades, differentials in Indian sex ratio lead to severe issues and have been particular interest to anthropologists and demographers. Hence, an attempt is made here to study the trends of sex ratio by residence from two points of view: firstly, the sex ratio (Number of females per 1000 males) of population of all ages and secondly, child sex ratio (Number female children per 1000 male children below the age of seven years).Table-3 lists data on sex ratio of India.

Sex Ratio

Table-3:Sex Ratio of India

Sex ratio by Residence	Census Year											
	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Total	972	964	955	950	945	946	941	930	934	926	933	940
Rural	979	975	970	966	965	965	963	949	950	938	946	947
Urban	910	872	846	838	831	860	845	858	880	894	900	926
Rural –Urban Gap	69	103	124	128	134	105	118	91	70	44	46	21

Source: Census of India, 2011

Table-3 reveals that in 1901, the sex ratio at the National level has worked out to 940 females per thousand males; whereas the rural sex ratio is pegged at 947and the urban sex ratio stands at 926. The corresponding figures in 2011 census were 940, 947 and 926 respectively. Thus, the number of females never exceeded the males since 1901, which influences many future vital events. The gap in rural and urban sex ratio was 69 in 1901 and comedown to 21 in 2011, excesses of males than females shows that sex ratio has been adverse to females. This can be owed to differentials in

migration and mortality rates, which are determined by socio-economic, cultural and many other factors.

Sex ratio by Size class of Town/City

The sex composition of Population that inhabited among cities and towns has been significantly differs due to level of industrialization, trade and commerce and multi-functional services which cause to phase of socio-economic development. This in turn leads to male-female gap, mainly sex ratio of urban settlements. The Indian Census classified size-class of urban

centers as Class-I with population of 1,00,000 and above, Class-II with 50,000-99,999, Class-III consist of 20,000-49,999, Class-IV with 10,000-19,999, Class-V holds 5,000-9,999 and

Class-VI with population of less than 5,000 (Census of India-1991, p.21). Table-4 holds data on Sex ratio by Size class of Town/City in India.

Table-4: Sex ratio by Size class of Town/City in India

Sex ratio by Size Class of town/city	Census Year											
	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Class-I	784	727	702	721	719	788	801	830	864	885	892	925
Class-II	937	898	870	847	886	910	884	885	901	911	922	942
Class-III	949	925	989	889	897	908	886	896	915	918	922	939
Class-IV	979	954	937	920	924	939	915	913	915	907	919	934
Class-V	970	953	944	929	938	948	905	898	892	901	917	942
Class-VI	931	913	907	894	894	900	855	858	861	872	867	924

Source: Census of India, 2011

Table-4 reveals the differentials in sex ratio by size class of towns/cities over a period of time. Sex ratio had been better in Class size of IV towns followed by Class-V, Class-III, Class-II and Cities with Class-I status in order. In general, better employment opportunities and more amenities exists in cities, and big towns as compared to medium and small towns. It causes to attract more male migrants than female thereby major reason for differential in sex ratio by size class of towns/cities.

The sex ratio worked out for population of all ages is not indicative of any clear picture to know whether it is favourable to females or otherwise. The child sex ratio generally affected by two factors namely mortality differentials and extent of medical interferences, which influence overall sex ratio. Hence, child sex ratio is always considered as the best indicator to understand the sex ratio at birth when the data on births by sex are not easily available. Differentials in child sex ratio explain changes girl child population over period of time. Data on child sex ratio of 0-6 years of age proved in table-4.

Child Sex Ratio

Table-4: Child sex ratio of India

Sex ratio by Residence	Census Year					
	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Total	976	964	962	945	927	914
Rural	957	968	963	948	934	919
Urban	951	948	959	935	906	902
Rural-Urban Gap	6	20	4	13	28	17

Source: Census of India, 2011.

Table-4 shows that in 1961 census, the child sex ratio at the National was 976; whereas the rural child sex ratio stands at 957 and urban child sex ratio was 951. The corresponding figures in 2011 census are 914, 919 and 902 respectively. Further, the gap in rural-urban child sex ratio was 6 in 1961, rose to 17 in 2011. Thus, the child sex ratio had been drastically declined and gap had been widened. The main causes for low child sex ratio and further decline, gap in rural-urban in the country are: Neglect of girl child resulting in their higher mortality rates at younger ages, high maternal mortality, sex selective abortions and female infanticide.

development in country. Differential in health status is measured by examining the male-female gap in infant mortality rates, Child mortality rates, and expectation of life at births over the years.

Health Status

Health Services are provided to the community through a network of Sub-centres, Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and Community Health Centres (CHCs) in the rural areas, where as Hospitals and Dispensaries etc. in the urban areas. Level of health services provided to the people is an indicator of

Infant Mortality

Infant mortality rate defined as “the number of infant deaths under one year old per 1,000 live births in a calendar year in a geographical area”. In general, an infant’s chances in India of living with an age of less than one year depends on its gender, where it is born, the mother’s age and education level, in addition whether she is well nourished and on the family’s access to clean water, sanitation. It also often used as an indicator of the level of health service that prevails in a country. Data on infant mortality rates of India given in table-5.

Table-5: Infant mortality rates of India by Gender

Year	Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)			Gap in IMR	Year	Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)			Gap in IMR
	Total	Male	Female			Total	Male	Female	
1980	114	113	115	-2	1996	72	71	73	-2
1982	105	106	104	2	1997	71	70	72	-2
1983	105	105	105	0	1998	72	70	73	-3
1984	104	104	104	0	1999	70	70	71	-1

1985	97	96	98	-2	2000	68	67	69	-2
1986	96	96	97	-1	2001	66	64	68	-2
1987	95	96	96	0	2002	63	62	65	-3
1988	94	94	96	-2	2003	60	57	64	-7
1989	91	92	90	2	2004	58	58	58	0
1990	80	78	81	-3	2005	58	56	61	-6
1991	80	81	80	1	2006	57	56	59	0
1992	79	80	79	1	2007	55	55	56	-1
1993	74	73	75	-2	2008	53	52	55	-3
1995	74	73	76	-3	2009	50	49	52	-3

Source: Sample Registration System, Registrar General India.

Table-5 reveals that in 1980, the infant mortality rate at the National level has worked out to 114; whereas the rural infant mortality registered as 113 947and the urban infant mortality rate stands at 115. The corresponding figures in 1996 census were 72, 71 and 73 respectively. Further, it declined to 50 for nation, 49 for males and 52 females. Since, 1980 most of the census, female infant deaths were exceeds than males, which shows the adverse conditions to females. This can be owed to socio-economic, cultural, religious and other factors that prevail in Indian society, which determined the survival of infant females.

Child Mortality

Child mortality, also known as under-5 mortality refers to “the death of infants and children under the age of five in a year to the total live births in that year”. India has the highest number of child deaths in the world, with an estimated 1.2 million deaths in 2015, accounts 20 percent of the 5.9 million global deaths. Yet in a society that values boys over girls, gender remains the biggest factor in an Indian baby’s chance of survival. For every 100 male Indian children under 5 that die, 131 females do-victims of neglect, poorer nutrition and second-rate medical care. Data on child mortality rates (under five years of age) are furnished in table-7.

Table-7: Child Mortality (under five years) by gender and Residence of India

Year	Total				Rural				Urban			
	Total	Male	Female	Gap	Total	Male	Female	Gap	Total	Male	Female	Gap
2008	69	64	73	9	76	71	81	10	43	41	46	5
2009	64	60	69	9	71	66	76	10	41	39	44	5

Source: Sample Registration System, Registrar General India.

Table-7 shows that in 2008, child mortality of India was 69, while for males stands at 64 and females was 73. The corresponding figures for rural were 76, 71 and 81; whereas for urban stands at 43, 41 and 40 respectively. National level the difference was 9; while rural had 10 and urban with 5 in 2008. Decrease in child mortality was observer over period. In 2009, Child mortality at National level was 64, while for males, 60 and females, 69. The corresponding figures for rural were 71, 66 and 76; whereas urban figures were 41, 39, and 44 respectively. Though, child mortality had declined significantly, still high in rural areas and also excess of females deaths were observed than males both in rural as well as urban areas, which clearly revels gender differentials in child mortality in India.

Life Expectancy

Life expectancy is a statistical measure of the average time of a person is expected to live, based on the year of their birth, their current age and other demographic factors including sex. Expectation of live at birth defined as “the average number of years a child born in a particular country or an area at a particular year is expected to live”. Life expectancy differentials between males and females are determined by many factors mainly being the economic status and the extent health care services, which contribute to the widening the gender gap. Data on estimated expectation of life at birth in India had given in table-8.

Table-8: Estimated Expectation of life at birth in India by Gender

Life Expectancy at Birth							
Census Year	Male	Female	Male-Female Gap	Census Year	Male	Female	Male-Female Gap
1901-10	22.6	23.3	-0.7	1981-85	55.4	55.7	-0.3
1911-20	19.4	20.9	-1.5	1986-90	57.7	58.1	-0.4
1921-30	26.9	26.6	0.3	1991-96	60.6	61.7	-1.1
1931-40	32.1	31.4	0.7	1996-01	62.3	65.3	-3.0
1941-50	32.4	31.7	0.7	2001-05	63.8	66.1	-2.3
1954-60	41.9	40.6	1.3	2006-10	65.8	68.1	-2.3
1961-70	46.4	44.7	1.7	2011-15	67.3	69.9	-2.6
1970-75	50.5	49.0	1.5	2016-20	68.8	71.1	-2.3
1976-80	52.5	52.1	0.4	2021-25	69.8	72.3	-2.5

Source: 1901-70: office of the Registrar General, India; 1975-90-Occational Paper SRS No. 3 of 1995; 1996-2001: (c) Report of the Technical Group on Population Projections, 1996-2016 (Registrar General, India; 2001-25: Report of the Technical Group on Population Projections, 2001-2026, M/O Health & Family Welfare.

Table-7 reveals that the expectation of life at birth for males was 22.6 years and females 23.3 years in 1901-10. The Corresponding figures were 67.3 years and 69.9 respectively in 2011-15 and estimated to increase 69.8 years for males and 72.3 years by 2021-25. This can be attributed to advance medical services, more access to food and improved socio-economic status thereby increase in life expectancy. The differentials in life expectancy were marginal between 1901-50, increased to 3.0 years in 1996-2001 and estimated to 2.5 years by 2021-25. Thus, life expectancy at birth has been gradually increasing and also more favourable to females. The men in India are breadwinner for the families, causes to physical, psychological stress and has struggle for means thereby chances death at earlier than females in India.

6. Conclusion

Although declining trend in gender differentials had been observed in India over period of time; however, still significant proportion of Gender differentials had been noticed in the aspects of Literacy Rates, Work Participation Rate, Labour Force Rates, Sex Ratio, Child Sex Ratio, Sex Ratio by Class Size of Towns/Cities and Child Mortality Rate. Moreover, excess of female infant and child deaths had observed in most of the periods, which are always adverse situation to females. In contrast, females had survived two and half years more than males in recent decades and also continued further for two and half decades; therefore, only aspect observed that favours to females.

7. Policy implications

- The Governments in India and others such as international donor agencies and NGOs need to develop a more in depth understanding of the gender

issues that operates through the cultural barriers/cultural taboos which work against the effective role of the women in society, to formulate policies which are relevant, effective and result oriented.

- The cultural mindset of parochialism, narrow-mindedness and suppression of womenfolk needs to be addressed through more awareness of the status of woman and her role in a contemporary society in religious activities.
- The prevailing patriarchal society that contain the traditional values and perceptions about the role and status of women must be given due consideration, so as to make effective policy frameworks to enhance the social status of women.
- Communities at the local level both in urban, semi-urban and rural areas need to be integrated into the policy decision making and implementation strategies regarding the uplift of female population in India and lastly
- Education policy must inclusive of girl child and must be accessible and community-based, so that its reach and benefits could be felt at the grassroots levels.

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