

Normality in Sex Ratio of India: Where Are We Lacking?

Dear Sir,

On March 8, the world is observing International Women's Day with goal of gender equality. The United Nations promotes the equal participation of women in achieving sustainable development, peace, security, and full respect for human rights.^[1] Sex ratio is one of the such important issues of gender equality. Each conception shall reach to healthy outcome with birth of baby either boy or girl without any preference as birthright. The overall sex ratio in India went down from 972 in 1901 to 930 in 1971, and this decline in the number of girls until the 1970s was attributed mainly to female infanticide.^[2]

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 of men dying; as males are biologically weak compare to female and historically men's have higher mortality due to risk taking behaviour and war participation. This evens out the sex ratio of a population as it grows older. India's sex ratio at birth (SRB) is far lower than 952 because of the preference for the male child. This means Indian's killing girl children in the womb. As on today, around 63 million girls are estimated to be "missing" in India because of such actions.^[3]

On the other side, SRB in 2011 shows an upward trend from the census 2001 data, from 933 females to that of 1000 males to 943 females to that of 1000 males.^[4] Almost 10 years, we required to upscale 10 points in sex ratio, and with this speed, we still require to spend more 60 years to achieve sex ratio of 1 female: 1 male, providing that all conditions remain same. Even though this is an extremely alarming trend, it is not new for India, which has seen a consistent lowering of the SRB since the first census of India 1871, where sex ratio was 940 women per 1000 men.^[5]

The Department of Community Medicine of Smt. B. K. Shah Medical Institute and Research center tried to find major gaps in the lowdown of failing sex ratio. On the day of International Women's Day 2018, with the help of Google form, we strained to answer some unsolvable questions till the date from the expert of medical and other field. We received 73 responses from Google link of questionnaire – "Your view on sex ratio." A low response rate from participants also increases gap of sex ratio.

Out of 73 participants, majority (60%) were male responses. About 61 (83.56%) believed that sex ratio in India is a public health problem. Almost all 98.63% responses believed that sex ratio is social problems.

The reasons we got in response to lowdown of sex ratio on India were "patriarchal mindsets with preference to male," "no role of women in decision-making-poor women's empowerment," "poor implementation of Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique (PC-PNDT) act," "Prevalent of Dowry as a custom," "lack of social security at old age," "poor women's literacy," "strong religious belief," "lack of security for girls in society," and "poor awareness about various aspects."

We did try to get solution from the participants. They have suggestions such as "women's empowerment," "education to female child," "respect female in surrounding," "gender equality at home," and "support government action for gender equality." There are few suggestions which can be strengthen at government level or implement, and they are "women's empowerment," "strengthen PC-PNDT act," "old-age social security," "compulsory women's education," strengthen "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Yojana," "social reform in context to gender equality," "capital punishment for whom breaches the rules," and others.

In conclusion, it is high time to raise one's voice toward normality of sex ratio of India. We need to work together for next six decades with mindset of gender equality to achieve normality in sex ratio.

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Conflicts of interest

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