

RURAL PARENTS PROFILE AND REASONS PERCEIVED BY THEM TOWARDS PREFERENCE FOR GIRL CHILD-AN ANALYSIS

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The scientific and technological development could not change the behavior of people much. Through sex determination technique, it is possible now to determine the sex of the foetus and if it is found to be female, its life is terminated even in the highly educated families. This is the reason that even as the mortality rate is declining and economic growth is accelerating the sex ratio in India is becoming more and more unfavorable towards girls. (Desai and et al., 2001) The child sex ratio in India has reduced from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001. Drastic fall was noticed in almost all northern states like Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. It was very visible in Punjab and Haryana where it fell suddenly more than 50 points and became to 874/1000 in Punjab and 861/1000 in Haryana. The situation in the southern and northeastern states is relatively comfortable. The reason perhaps is due to the better social status of women in south and matriarchal society of north-east. If Gujarat alone is considered the fall in child sex ratio (0-6 years) is very disturbing. Where it suddenly dropped by 50 points from 928 in 1991 to 878 in 2001. The situation in north Gujarat especially in its developed talukas like Unjha, Visnagar and Mehsana is very disturbing, where it has gone down to 734, 770 and 772 respectively.

Women and girls, particularly the poor are more susceptible to and trapped in the cycle of disease and illness primarily due to their nutritional status being affected by unequal access to food, healthcare and heavy work demands. To add to this, very few do not receive medical treatment before the illness is well advanced. Another reason of the poor health and nutritional status of women in India is mainly due to patriarchy and other socio cultural constraints leading to her secondary status at home. It is a bit-

ter reality that in India women's health and nutrition is inextricably linked to social, cultural and economic factors. When serving food, women serve larger portions to their husbands and male children first, only then do they feed their female children and they tend to ignore the importance of their own food requirements. (Capoor et al, 2000). Gender discriminating regarding food entitlements both quality and quantity is one of the most important factors affecting women's health status. (Women and health, A CHETNA Report, 1998). Over the last 10 years, efforts towards gender sensitization of a traditionally male dominated society have been intensified through various programmes. In the Millennium Development Goal-3 promotion of gender equity and empowerment of women is one of the central concerns of the 10th five year plan. (2002-2007), which spells out a three pronged strategy for empowering women. i.e. social empowerment, economic empowerment and gender justice.

Objectives:- 1. To find out the reasons perceived by rural parents for discrimination i.e., Preference for the girl child, education, nutrition and health. 2. To find out the difference in reasons perceived by rural parents with regard to their preference for the girl child, in education, nutrition and health care.

Research Methodology- Reasons perceived by rural parents for discriminating girls with regard to their Preference, Education, Nutrition and healthcare were studied as dependent variables. A pre-structured and pre-tested interview schedule was used for collecting data. Data were collected by personal interview technique. Statistical analysis was done by computing frequencies, percentage 'Z' test and by computing Spearman's rank correlation coefficient.

Result and Discussion- Reasons perceived by

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rural parents for discrimination (i.e., Preference for the girl child, education, nutrition and healthcare) (See Table-1) It can be concluded from the above table perceived reasons that rural parents give less preference to girls due to religious and socio-economic reasons. The findings are in the lines of findings Cain (1984), Yadav and Badari (1999), Kolanad (2002), Prasad (2001), TINNARI (2002) and Sharma (2004). (See Table-2)

It can be concluded from the above table perceived reasons that main reasons of discriminating girls for their education were social and economic in nature. The finding is affirmed with the finding of Joshi (1997). (See Table-3)

It can be inferred from the above table in given three reasons perceived by rural parents that girls are discriminated in respect of their nutrition and healthcare because of physical, economical & social reasons. Findings is affirmed with the finding of Cain (1984). Significant difference in the reasons perceived by rural fathers and mothers with regard to girl's preference. (See Table-4)

Spearman's rank correlation was applied to see significant difference if any in the ranks assigned by rural fathers and mothers to the reasons of discriminating girls with regard their preference. It is evident from 'r' value given in above table that there was significant difference in the reasons perceived by rural fathers and mothers with regard to preference for girl child. (See Table-5) From the ranks given in above table it is evident that the finding i.e. "educated girls dislike to do household work." is in the line of finding of Joshi (1997).

To find out, if there was any significant difference or not in the ranks of rural fathers or mothers. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was applied. It was significant difference in the ranks of reasons perceived by rural fathers and mothers with regard to discriminating girls for education. (See Table-6) It was found that there was significant difference in the reasons perceived by rural fathers and mothers with regard to girl's nutrition and healthcare. The findings leads to conclude that the fathers and mothers differ in their perceived reasons of discrimination girls with respect to girl's nutrition & healthcare.

Conclusion-It can be inferred that all the

reasons perceived by rural parents are religious, economic, social and cultural in nature, which leads to conclude that to remove discrimination against girls it is necessary to educate parents. It is also necessary to bring change in religious beliefs, socio-economic and cultural conditions of rural parents. There was significant difference were noted in the reasons perceived by rural fathers and mothers with regard to all three aspects of gender discrimination. i.e. their preference for girl child, girls education and girls nutrition and healthcare.

Table 1 : Reasons perceived by rural parents for discriminating girls with regard to their preference.

(n = 200)

Sr. No.	Perceived reasons	Frequency	Rank
1.	Family's/Father's name can be ensured by a male child only	151	II
2.	Male can inherit property	18	X
3.	Male child is perceived as an essential investment for all kinds of securities of parents in old age	96	III
4.	There is no fear of security for boys in society throughout their life	80	IV
5.	Sons are source of economic security to parents for their old age	114	VI
6.	Sons increase social status of the family	72	VII
7.	Parents do not get satisfaction even without son.	100	VIII
8.	As boys have to work hard, so they require better Nutrition & Health care than girls	156	IX
9.	The expenses on a boy's marriage are less than on girls	45	XIII
10.	Boys requires more nutrition and health care than girls because of their more economic output	114	VI
11.	Male children are less expensive than brought up	25	XIV
12.	Boys are productive members of the society	2	XV
13.	Boys require more nutrition and healthcare for maintaining their fast physical growth	38	XII
14.	Boy can ensure better fortune for the parents	74	XI
15.	Boys require more nutrition and healthcare to Maintain their muscular physical structure	54	X
16.	Boys are permanent member of the family whereas girls are temporary	104	IV
17.	Boys are more physically active than girls	47	VII
18.	If boy is healthy then only the next generation will be healthy	109	III