

PREVALENCE OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN MEHSANA DISTRICT—AN ANALYSIS



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Nature does not discriminate between male & female. Hence their number in an ideal society are almost equal. No doubt Gender equality is enshrined in the Indian constitution also but society discriminate women and girls in almost every walk of life. Female foeticide and infanticide are examples of denial of life itself. (See table no.1) Sex of foetus is determined and if it is found to be female, its life is terminated even in the highly educated families. At the later stage of life, female children are relatively deprived in the family in terms of nutrition and healthcare. (See table no.2) Girl babies tend to be breastfed for shorter periods of time and as they get older receive smaller portions of food, particularly quality food e.g. milk, fruits and vegetables than that of boys. When serving food, women serve larger portions to their husbands and male children first only then do they feel their female children and they tend to ignore the importance of their own food requirements. (Capoor et. al., 2000) Even girl's education is still given low priority because primary concern of rural people is livelihood. Siddhanta and Nandy (2003) in their study found wide disparity in educational level of males and females in Gujarat and indicated that both in rural and urban sectors gender gap in education development was largely due to gender gap in average years of schooling. (See table no.3 & 4)

Objectives:- 1. To study the overall perceptions of rural parents towards gender discrimination with regard to preference for girl child, nutrition & healthcare and Education of girl child. 2. To find out the difference in the overall perceptions of rural Parents (fathers & mothers), with regard to their preference for the girl child, Education and nutrition & healthcare. 3. To find out the relationship if any between rural parents

characteristics & their overall perceptions.

Research Methodology : Present Study was conducted in purposively selected Unjha and Visnagar talukas of Mehsana district because foeticide rate was highest in this talukas. (See table No.1) Two Hundred parents (100 Mothers & 100 Fathers) were selected randomly. Perception of rural parents towards gender discrimination with respect to preference for girl child, their education and nutrition and healthcare of girl child were studied as dependent variables. Personal socio-economic, communicational and psychological characteristics of rural parents were studied as independent Variables. A pre-structured and pre-tested interview scheduled was used for collecting data. Data were collected by personal interview technique. Statistical analysis was done by computing frequencies, percentages, Mean Standard deviation correlation coefficient ('r') test and 'z' test. The above figures presented in above table 3 revealed that disparity in educational level of Males & Females exist in all the talukas of Mehsana district. Though in Unjha and Visnagar talukas, educational level of women is comparatively high but female foeticide rate is also high comparison of other talukas. This indicates the positive relationship between education and gender discrimination. It can be inferred that, economic prosperity alone can not ensure gender equality in education in Indian Society. Improvement in average years of schooling for female was suggested as effective policy prescription.

Result and Discussion :

Data presented in above table 4 indicated that majority perceptions of rural parents and negative perceptions towards girl child. Only 12% parents

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Table No. 1 Sex ratio of women and female child in Mehsana District.

Sr. No.	Taluka	Female sex ratio (%)	Female child sex ratio (0-6 years)	Increase in foeticide rate (%)
1.	Unjha	932	734	21.45
2.	Visnagar	917	770	16.08
3.	Mehsana	912	772	15.36
4.	Vijapur	925	782	14.46
5.	Bechraji	951	856	10.00
6.	Kheralu	938	873	6.93
7.	Satlasana	951	876	7.89
8.	Vadnagar	970	859	-
9.	Kadi	917	802	-
Total :-		926	798	13.23

(Source : Census 2001)

Table : 3 Educational Levels of Females and Males in Mehsana District (Gujarat)

Sr. No.	Talukas	Female (%)	Male (%)
1.	Unjha	72.3	89.60
2.	Visnagar	69.96	88.89
3.	Mehsana	67.82	88.53
4.	Vijapur	66.80	87.14
5.	Bechraji	53.25	83.08
6.	Kheralu	52.06	79.92
7.	Satlasana	44.03	77.36
8.	Vadnagar	55.62	84.31
9.	Kadi	61.91	85.65
10.	Gujarat	58.60	80.50

(Source : Population census, 2001).
Gender Gap in Literacy Rates, 2001.

Sr. No.	Type of perceptions	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Negative (4-6)	117	58.5
2.	Neutral (7-9)	59	29.5
3.	Positive (10-12)	24	12

Table : 4 Perceptions of rural parents towards preference for the girl child. (n = 200)

Sr. No.	Type of perceptions	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Negative (4-6)	117	58.5
2.	Neutral (7-9)	59	29.5
3.	Positive (10-12)	24	12

Table: 2 Health and Nutritional Status of Women in India and Gujarat.

Sr. No.	Indicator	India	Gujarat
1.	Sex Ratio (Adult)	933/1000	921/1000
2.	Sex Ratio (0-6 Years)	927/1000	878/1000
3.	Maternal Mortality rate	0.44 %	3.89 %
4.	Infant Mortality rate	6.4 %	6.4 %
5.	Life expectancy of female at birth	63 Years	62.77 Years
6.	Anemia in Pregnant women	50-90 %	46.3 %

(Source : Census 2001, NFHS-2, 1998-99)

Table : 5 Perceptions of parents towards nutrition and health care of girl child. (n= 200)

Sr. No.	Types of perception	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Negative (12-19)	10	5
2.	Neutral (20-27)	17	8.5
3.	Positive (28-36)	173	86.5

Table: 6 Perceptions of rural parents towards education of girl child. (n= 200)

Sr. No.	Type of perceptions	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Negative (12-19)	48	24
2.	Neutral (20-27)	32	16
3.	Positive (28-36)	120	60

Table: 7 Significant difference in the perceptions of rural parents towards preference for girl child. (n₁ = 100; n₂ = 100)

	Mean	Mean difference	Standard error of mean difference	Z-Value	Results
Fathers	6.4900	0.240	0.287	0.837	NS
Mothers	6.7300				

NS= Non Significant

Table: 8 Significant difference in the perceptions of rural parents towards nutrition and health care of girl child(n₁ = 100; n₂ = 100)

	Mean	Mean difference	Standard error of mean difference	'Z' value	Results
Fathers	32.5100	1.4800	0.699	2.1185	*
Mothers	31.0300				

*Significant at 0.05 per cent level.

Table: 9 Significant difference in the perceptions of rural parents towards education of girl child.(n₁ = 100; n₂ = 100)

	Mean	Mean difference	Standard error of mean difference	'Z' value	Results
Fathers	29.0000	2.6600	1.0474	2.5397	*
Mothers	26.3400				

*Significant at 0.05 per cent level.

Table: 10 : Co-efficient of correlation analysis for determining association between independent variables and perceptions of rural parents (dependent variables)

Sr. No.	Independent variables	Dependent variables		
		Perceptions of parents with regard to		
		(Preference for girl child) (Y ₁)	(Girls education) (Y ₂)	(Girls nutrition and health care) (Y ₃)
Co-efficient of correlation 'r' value				
1.	Age (X ₁)	-0.0533 ^{NS}	-0.1859**	-0.0561 ^{NS}
2.	Education (X ₂)	-0.2710**	0.5435**	0.3968**
3.	Caste (X ₃)	0.0008 ^{NS}	0.1269 ^{NS}	-0.0299 ^{NS}
4.	Family type (X ₄)	-0.1265*	-0.1512*	-0.2663**
5.	Family size (X ₅)	0.0945 ^{NS}	-0.2669**	-0.1115 ^{NS}
6.	Annual family income (X ₆)	0.0183 ^{NS}	0.2190**	0.1444*
7.	Occupation (X ₇)	0.0657 ^{NS}	-0.0658 ^{NS}	-0.1066 ^{NS}
8.	Landholding(X ₈)	0.1613*	0.0658 ^{NS}	-0.1473*
9.	Mass media exposure (X ₉)	-0.821**	0.4069**	0.3027**
10.	Social participation (X ₁₀)	-0.0539 ^{NS}	0.3262**	0.2881**
11.	Urban contacts (X ₁₁)	-0.0766 ^{NS}	0.3425**	0.3117**
12.	Change proneness (X ₁₂)	-0.1166 ^{NS}	0.0634 ^{NS}	-0.0545 ^{NS}
13.	Localiteness – Cosmopolitaness (X ₁₃)	-0.0289 ^{NS}	0.1935**	0.1214 ^{NS}
14.	Conservatism – Liberalism (X ₁₄)	0.7130**	0.3137**	0.3469**

* = Significant at 0.05 level.

** = Significant at 0.01 level. NS = Non Significant.

showed positive perceptions for girl child. The above findings reaffirm with the findings of yadav and Badari (1999); Jatrana (2001), Visaria (2005). The finding leads to conclude that even after several efforts of government for gender equality; discrimination against girls still persists and majority of rural parents have negative perceptions toward girls. Data presented in above table-5 indicate that majority of (86.5%) of rural parents had positive type of perceptions towards nutrition and healthcare of girl child followed by neutral type of perceptions (8.5%) only 5 percent of rural parents expressed negative type of perceptions towards nutrition and healthcare of girl child. Means perceptions of majority of rural parents are positive. It can be inferred that perceptions of rural parents have changed towards girl's nutrition and healthcare it shows that now-a days parents have become more conscious about the nutrition and healthcare of girl child. Data presented in above table-5 Portrays that majority of rural parents (60%) showed positive perceptions towards girl's education only 24%

parents showed negative perception towards girl's education and 16% parents were found neutral in their perception regarding girls education. The findings of study are in contrast of the finding of Bhardwaj and grower (2002) Arokiasamy and Pradhan (2003) and Siddhanta and Nandy (2003). This kind of positive change in rural parent's perceptions may be helpful in improving the educational status of rural girls in future. The 'Z' value given in above table indicate that there was no significant difference in the perceptions of father and mothers towards preferences for girl child. Which is negative sign for gender quality. From the 'Z' values given in above table-8 it is clear that there was significant difference in the perceptions of rural parents, Mean values showed that perceptions of rural fathers were comparatively more positive than rural mothers perceptions.

From the 'Z' values given in above table-9 it is clear that there was significant difference in the perceptions of rural parents, Mean values showed that perceptions of rural fathers were comparatively more positive than rural mothers towards education of girl child. It is evident from the 'r' values given in above table-10 indicate that Education mass media exposure and conservatism liberalism showed significantly negative correlation at 0.01 percent level of significance with perceptions of rural parents with regard to preference for girl child. Where as, age and family size showed significant but negative correlation at 0.01

percent level of significance and education, annual family income, mass media exposure, social participation, urban contacts as well as localiteness cosmopolitness and conservatism liberalism was showed significant correlation at 0.01 percent level of significance with girl's education. Family type showed significant but negative correlation at 0.01 percent level of significance and education mass media exposure, social participation, urban contacts as well as conservatism liberalism were found to have significant correlation at 0.01 percent level of significance with girl's nutrition and healthcare. Land holding showed significant but family type showed significantly negative correlation at 0.05 percent level of significance with preference for girl child. Whereas family type was found to have significantly negative relationship at 0.05 percent level of significance with girls education and finally annual family income showed significant correlation as well as land holding showed significant but negative relationship at 0.05 percent level of significance with nutrition and healthcare of girl child.

Conclusion and Recommendation : It can be inferred from the findings of study that negative perception towards preference for girl child still persist but improvement in socio-economic conditions and positive change in religious and cultural believes of rural parents can definitely reduce the issue of gender discrimination. It can be also recommended that rural mothers need to be educated more intensively than father on all aspects of gender discrimination studied.

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