

## Perceptions of Rural Parents of Mehsana District regarding preference for girl child—A Gender Analysis

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Nature does not discriminate between male and female. Hence their number is an ideal society seems to be almost equal. But in India, women /girls are discriminated against in almost every walk of life, right from the inception of life itself. Female foeticide and infanticide are examples of denial of the right of life itself, which are practiced even in the highly educated families. This is the reason that the sex ratio in India has reduced from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001. Drastic fall has been noticed in almost all northwestern states like Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. If Gujarat alone is considered, 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. If the foeticide rate will increase continuously at the present rate, it will result in shortage of 60 lakh girls in 5 crore population of Gujarat. At this junction it was felt necessary to sensitize rural parents of Mehsana District about the social evil of gender discrimination because this is the District where sex ratio was found lowest according to census of 2001. But, before planning any kind of gender sensitization programme was felt necessary to study the existing perceptions of rural parents of this District so, the present study was planned with the following objectives—

### Objectives:-

1. To study the perceptions of rural parents towards gender discrimination with regard to preference for the girl child.
2. To find out the difference in the perceptions of rural parents (mother & father) with regard to their preference for the girl child.
3. To find out the relationship between rural parents characteristics and their preference for the girl child.

### Research Methodology—

Present study was conducted in purposively selected Visnagar and Unjha talukas of Mehsana district because foeticide rate was highest in this talukas. Two hundred parents (100 mother & 100 father) were

selected randomly. Perception of rural parents towards gender discrimination with respect to preference for girl child were studied as dependent variables. Personal, socioeconomic, communicational and psychological characteristic of rural parents were studied as independent variables.

**Table - 1** Sex ratio of women and female child

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	Satapur	951	876	7.89
8	Visnagar	970	859	-
9	Negative (4-6) Kadi	917	802	-
10	Neutral (7-9)	926	798	13.23
11	Total...	926	798	13.23
12	Positive (10-12)	24	12	

(Source :- Census 2001)

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.

### Result and Discussion :

**Table - 2** Perceptios of rural parents towards preference for the girl child (n=200)

Data in Table-2 revealed that majority of rural parents had negative perceptions towards girl child.

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Only 12% parents showed positive perceptions for girl child. The above findings reaffirm with the findings of Yadav and Badari (1999); Jatarana (2001) Visaria (2005). The findings 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.

**Table - 3** Significant difference in the perceptions of rural parents towards preference for girl child (n<sub>1</sub>=100; n<sub>2</sub>=100)

**NS = Non Significant**

The 'Z' value given in above table indicate that there was no significant difference in the perceptions of fathers and mothers towards preference for girl child. Means, perceptions of rural fathers and mothers were similar i.e. negative towards the girl child. Surprisingly, the mean values indicate that mothers who are usually expected to have positive perceptions towards girl child showed relatively more negative perceptions towards girl child which is negative sign for gender equality.

**Table: 4** Association between dependent and independent variables.

alism showed significantly negative correlation at 0.01 percent level of significance. Land holding showed significant and family type showed significant but negative correlation at 0.05 percent level of significance. Whereas age, caste, family size, family type, occupation, social participation, urban contacts, change proneness and localite- compositeness showed non-significant relationship with perceptions of rural parents with regard to preference for girl child.

**Conclusion**

It can be concluded from the finding of study that in this era of gender equity negative perceptions towards preference for girl child still persist. Improvement in socio-economic conditions and positive change in religious and cultural believes of rural parents can definitely reduce the issue of gender discrimination. Rural mothers needs to be educated more intensively than fathers on the above aspects of gender discrimination.

**References :-**

\* Achanta L.D.(1983). Management of values rural women. Indian journal of extension education, 19 (3-4): 83-89.

\* Bhati, S.K. (1985) A study of socio-psychological and organizational constraints in the promotion of biogas technology in Haryana. Ph.D.Thesis, Haryana agricultural university, Hisar.

\* Chattopadhyay, S. (1985) A study of some psychosocial correlates of adoption of innovations. Ph.D. Thesis, Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi.

3 Caste (X<sub>3</sub>) 0.0008 \*\*

\* Director of Census operations, Gujarat (2001). Gujarat Family Type (X<sub>4</sub>) r=0.1265

4 Dropping Sex ratio will disturb equilibrium. The Times of India, Ahmedabad, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001. P.2.

5 Family Type (X<sub>4</sub>) 0.0008 \*\*

\* Anandani, S. (2001). Does Maternal employment affect child care arrangement and breast feeding differently to boys and girls? Evidence from rural north India, Paper presented in the session 'Sex, women's labour. Proper nutrition and reproduction of the 23<sup>rd</sup> IUSSP conference held in Brazil, 18-24 August 2001.

6 Social Participation (X<sub>10</sub>) 0.0523 NS

\* Kulshreshtha, S.P. (1980). Manual for Socio economic status scale (Rural). Department of Teacher Education, DAV College, Dharwad.

7 Land holding (X<sub>8</sub>) 0.1613 NS

8 Mass Media (X<sub>9</sub>) 0.0766 NS

9 Caste (X<sub>3</sub>) 0.0008 \*\*

10 Land holding (X<sub>8</sub>) 0.0287 NS

11 Education (X<sub>7</sub>) 0.0837 NS

12 Caste (X<sub>3</sub>) 0.0008 \*\*

13 Land holding (X<sub>8</sub>) 0.0287 NS

14 Education (X<sub>7</sub>) 0.0837 NS

\* = Significant at 0.05 Level

\*\* = Significant at 0.01 Level

NS = Not Significant

\* Visaria (2005). Sex selective Abortion in India: some Empirical Evidence from Gujarat and Haryana states. Gujarat Institute of Development Research, Ahmedabad. <http://www.google.com>.

\* Yadav, S.S. and Badari, V.S. (1999) Gender Preference and anxiety of pregnant women. Indian Journal of Social Work, 60(4): 538-551.

Data presented in table-4 indicate that education, mass- media exposure and conservatism-liber-