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<b>Title</b>	<b>Declining Child Sex ratio in India: An Empirical Investigation</b>

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## **ABSTRACT**

Inequality between men and women is deep rooted in many countries of the world. Though females have made great strides since 1990, they have not yet gained equality. As per World Population Prospects, 2011, China and India have indicated the most unfavorable population sex ratios among the 10 most populous countries in the world. The trend in the decennial census of India across past few decades indicated the lowest sex ratio of 927 females in 1991 ever since 1901. Nonetheless, the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century marked the beginning of long term positive change in the status of females in India. Although the population sex ratio presented some encouraging trends across the country, the same was not true in the case of the child sex ratio. With a gender sensitive approach, there was no improvement seen in the child sex ratio trend. There has been a consistent decline in juvenile sex ratio since 1961 regardless of the quality of census enumeration. The depleting child sex ratio, which has serious social and economic implications, is not a natural phenomenon but is achieved through a deliberate elimination of girls through pre-natal killing and post-natal neglect of girls that result in excess girl child mortality. Sex selection in favour of boys is a manifestation of various factors prevalent in our country. The preference for sons has deep roots in India for cultural, economic, social and religious reasons which include- financial support, old age security, property inheritance, dowry, family lineage, prestige and power beliefs about religious duties and salvation. On the other hand, girls are considered to be a liability and a net drain on parental resources in most patrilineal societies.

Against the backdrop of this adverse situation, the study has been conducted with the following objectives:

- Estimate the number of girls that have gone missing at birth, infancy and at under-five age age-group.
- Examine the trends and determinants of declining child sex ratio in India and analyze among many variables, whether women's economic activity, education and economic development positively contribute to contain the adverse child sex ratio.
- Analyze whether the fiscal policy instruments- at national and sub-national level are effective in addressing the critical issue of declining child sex ratio.

**Chapter 1-Introduction** addresses the critical issue of adverse child sex ratio noticed in several parts of the country. The chapter highlights the striking intensity of the masculinity of the child sex ratio in different regions, religions and tribal communities of India.

**Chapter 2-“Review of Literature”**,critically analyses the existing literature and describes the historical overview and regional patterns of the distribution of child sex ratios, causes and consequences of deficit of girls in the country and its legal implications.

Various studies assessing the magnitude of the females that have gone missing globally and nationally are also studied in detail in the concluding part of the chapter.

**Chapter 3-“Estimating Missing Girls in India”**, estimates the number of missing girls in the pre-natal, infant and early childhood stage for 2011. The results suggest that in India, a total of 1.80 million girls went missing by the age of five out of which 0.59 million girls could never get a chance to be born, showing the existence of severe gender bias at birth and young ages. About 1.21 million girls in under five age group died as a result of post natal gender discrimination.These shortages of girls was more pronounced in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and highly developed States of Haryana , Rajasthan and Punjab regions of India.

**Chapter 4- “Trends and Determinants of Child Sex Ratio”**, investigates the relationship between child sex ratio and its socio-economic determinants using panel regression method covering data for the last five decennial census across fifteen major states of India. The regression results indicate that both literacy(male and female) have shown an inverse relationship with the child sex ratio. The same has been true with highly educated women also. The disaggregated panel data analysis by regional units determined child sex ratio to be inversely related to both female literacy and female economic activity rate with relatively higher elasticity coefficients for urban regions of India.These findings strongly give evidence of deep rooted patriarchal outcomes which are not responsive to the improvement of ‘female autonomy and empowerment’.

**Chapter 5-“Gender Budgeting in India”**, deals with the study of various schemes of Government of India which seeks to address gender inequalities through the rationale of Gender Budgeting. The study noted that despite the gravity of estimates, Government of India has not addressed the concern effectively in the fiscal policy till recently. Though a significant policy announcement was made in terms of sex ratio, recent government’s flagship programme “Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao” (Save the girl child and educate her), was not yet backed up by significant fiscal allocation.

The chapter also analyses the targeted schemes for the girl child in some of the disturbing north-western States of India.The analysis of the State’s budgetary provisions reveals that though the idea is to improve attitudes and create a favourable mind-set towards the girl child, it has not been able to translate effectively in achieving the desired outcomes.There is an urgent need to re-examine and redesign the strategies to address the issue of declining child sex ratio in India.

**Chapter 6-“Summary and Conclusion”**,summarizes, concludes and suggests policy measures.