



Research Paper

Missing Girl Child – An Analysis of Child Sex Ratios and Its Implications in Kerala

Dr .Suprabha L
Dept of Economics
Govt.College , Malappuram
Kerala

ABSTRACT

Women outnumber men in Europe, Japan and America parts of the world but in countries of Asia and North Africa the situation is different. In India it is high in backward States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan. In some states like Andhra Pradesh and Kerala the situation is somewhat different. Kerala has the highest female sex ratio in the country. . The child sex ratio (0-6 years) shows an absolutely opposite trend something we can refer to as “missing girl child” instead missing women. The term "missing women" indicates a shortfall in the number of women relative to the expected number of women in a region or country. This paper compares and examines the situation of child sex ratio in Kerala over the years and tries to find out whether there is an improvement or decline in child sex ratio in the state and examines the indications and implications of declining child sex ratio.

KEYWORDS

Missing Girl Child, Adult Sex Ratio, Child Sex Ratio, Live Birth, Still Birth.

Received 20 July, 2024; Revised 01 Aug., 2024; Accepted 03 Aug., 2024 © The author(s) 2024.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. INTRODUCTION

The term "missing women" indicates a shortfall in the number of women relative to the expected number of women in a region or country. The phrase “missing women” was coined by Amartya Sen when he showed that in parts of the developing world, the ratio of women to men in the population is suspiciously low. The worsening sex ratio (number of females per 1,000 males) in countries such as India depicted the gross neglect of women. He estimated that more than 100 million women were missing due to gender discrimination. It was commonly believed that “boy preference” at birth and the mistreatment of young girls were the main reasons. This is one of the major problems faced by women in the world. In Europe, Japan and America women have better nutritional status and health care. Women outnumber men in these parts of the world but in countries of Asia and North Africa the situation is different. In India the death rate is higher among women due to many reasons. In India it is high in backward States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan. In some states like Andhra Pradesh and Kerala the situation is somewhat different. Kerala has the highest female sex ratio in the country. Women outnumber men in the general category. But the situation is different in the child sex ratio. The child sex ratio (0-6 years) shows an absolutely opposite trend something we can refer to as “missing girl child” instead missing women. This paper examines the situation of child sex ratio in Kerala and tries to find out whether there is an improvement or decline in child sex ratio in the state and examines the indications and implications of declining child sex ratio. The study is descriptive in nature and makes use of secondary data to analyse the state of child sex ratio and its implications in adult sex ratio in Kerala.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study are

1. To examine the situation of adult and child sex ratio in Kerala.
2. To find out whether there is an improvement or decline in child sex ratio in Kerala and examine the indications and implications of declining child sex ratio

II. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature and makes use of secondary data for analyzing the present situation of adult and child sex ratio in Kerala and its indications and implications in Kerala. Secondary data is collected from various websites, journals and books. Tables are used to analyse the data and to draw inferences.

ADULT & CHILD SEX RATIO IN KERALA

Kerala is the southernmost state of Indian sub continent. It is the state in India which has the highest literacy rate. It is ahead of most Indian states in education, gender equality, social justice, health standards, and law and order. Moreover Kerala has the lowest child death rate in India. The state has the highest female sex ratio in the country. Women outnumber men in the general category but the child sex ratio (0-6 years) shows an absolutely opposite trend. The adult sex ratio in Kerala is comparatively high as the number of registered deaths of females is lower than that of males (See Table-1)

Table 1
Adult Sex ratio and Child Sex ratio in Kerala 2001-2011

District/State	Adult Sex Ratio			Child Sex Ratio		
	2001	2011	Decadal Change	2001	2011	Decadal Change
Kerala	1058	1084	26	960	964	4
Kasaragod	1047	1080	33	959	961	2
Kannur	1090	1136	46	962	971	9
Wayanad	995	1035	40	959	965	6
Kozhikode	1057	1098	41	959	969	10
Malappuram	1066	1098	32	960	965	5
Palakkad	1066	1067	1	963	967	4
Thrissur	1092	1108	16	958	950	-8
Ernakulam	1019	1027	8	954	961	7
Idukki	993	1006	13	969	964	-5
Kottayam	1025	1039	14	962	964	2
Alappuzha	1079	1100	21	956	951	-5
Pathanamthitta	1094	1032	38	967	976	9
Kollam	1069	1113	44	960	973	13
Thiruvananthapuram	1060	1087	27	962	964	2

Source: Kerala Economic Review 2017

There is a declining trend in the child sex ratio. The child sex ratio was lower in 6 districts as compared to state average in 2001. The child sex ratio was below the state average of 960 in Kasaragod (959), Kozhikode (959), Thrissur (948), Idukki (958), Kottayam (957) and Ernakulam (954) in 2001. The child sex ratio is lower in 4 districts as compared to state average in 2011. The child sex ratio is below the state average of 964 in Kasaragod (961), Thrissur (950), Ernakulam (961) and Alappuzha (951) in 2011. Three districts have shown even a negative decadal growth in child sex ratio- Thrissur(-8), Idukki(-5) and Alappuzha (-5). All the districts have a ratio below 1,000. The highest decadal increase is in Kollam (13) followed by Kozhikode (10). The decadal change in other districts is below 10.

CHILD SEX RATIO AT BIRTH

The child sex ratio at birth in different years from 2000 to 2017 reveals that there is a declining trend in child sex ratio in most of the years except for some years. Except between 2000 and 2001 and between 2016 and 2017 there is not even an increase of 10 numbers (see table 2).

Table-2
Child Sex Ratio at birth in different years -Kerala

Year	Sex Ratio	Year	Sex Ratio
2000	998	2010	939
2001	968	2011	939
2002	944	2012	955
2003	951	2013	942
2004	946	2014	942
2005	949	2015	948
2006	955	2016	954
2007	944	2017	964
2008	952		
2009	942		

Source: Kerala Vital Statistics

CHILD POPULATION IN KERALA

The child population (0-6 years) in Kerala shows a declining trend. Census data shows an absolute decline in the child population in the State. Kerala's total child population in 2011 was 3,472,955 and 3,793,146 in 2001 census data. The population of children in the age group 0-6 years in Kerala was 12 per cent at the Census of 2001 and 10 per cent at the Census of 2011. Hence it can be inferred from the analysis of the data in tables 1 and 2 that child sex ratio is declining in Kerala. But the adult sex ratio is higher in Kerala.

For a better analysis of the situation the live birth rate and still birth rate and death rate are also considered. A live birth is the complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of a product of conception, irrespective of the duration of pregnancy, which, after such separation, breathes or shows any other evidence of life. Still birth is foetal death where a product of conception has attained at least the prescribed period of gestation. Death means permanent disappearance of all evidence of life at any time after the live birth has taken place. The number of live births of females is lower than that of the males in different years. The number of live births of females is lower than that of the males in all the years from 2009 to 2016. The declining number of live birth of females is the major factor contributing towards decline in the child sex ratio. The live birth over different years is depicted in table 3

Table-3
Number of Live Births Registered by Sex and Residence

Year	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
2009	109961	101062	211336	170233	162747	333012	280194	263809	544348
2010	113755	104154	218153	168256	160528	328811	282011	264682	546964
2011	200102	186662	386782	45607	43323	88933	288999	271239	560268
2012	105304	98078	203394	173162	167816	340994	278466	265894	544388
2013	101670	93432	195107	174550	166676	341225	276220	260108	536352
2014	101417	94468	195896	172944	165602	338562	274361	260070	534458
2015	94234	88329	182568	170658	162766	333445	264892	251095	516013
2016	70093	66302	136403	183869	176003	359889	253962	242305	496292

Source: Kerala Vital Statistics

Data about the number of infant deaths registered between 2009 and 2016 presupposes that the number of female deaths is lower as compared with that of male deaths (see table 4).

Table-4
Number of Infant deaths Registered by Sex and Residence in Kerala

Year	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person

2009	454	358	818	1616	1278	2906	2070	1636	3724
2010	558	504	1067	1723	1261	2992	2281	1765	4059
2011	629	609	1243	1681	1286	2975	2310	1895	4218
2012	710	625	1339	1499	1511	3013	2209	2136	4352
2013	646	584	1234	1447	1183	2639	2093	1767	3873
2014	595	543	1140	1304	991	2305	1899	1534	3445
2015	562	461	1023	1118	898	2027	1080	1359	3050
2016	475	414	890	1056	823	1884	1531	1237	2774

Source: Kerala Vital Statistics

The number of still births of females is lower than that of males over the years in Kerala. The female still birth rate in Kerala fell from 4.72 to 4.09 during the period from 2011 to 2016, whereas, still birth in males remained relatively the same over the years. Hence it is inferred that increase in still birth of females is not a factor contributing towards a declining child sex ratio (see Table 5).

Table-5
Number of Still Births Registered by Sex and Residence in Kerala

Year	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
2009	1889	782	1680	202	202	408	1091	985	2089
2010	325	265	595	645	543	1197	970	808	1792
2011	538	452	1001	919	834	1771	1457	1286	2772
2012	462	401	867	772	823	1605	1234	1224	2472
2013	484	426	918	986	858	1860	1470	1284	2778
2014	439	431	880	869	760	1658	1308	1201	2538
2015	489	361	853	868	720	1609	1357	1081	2462
2016	361	277	641	917	718	1652	1278	995	2293

Source: Kerala Vital Statistics

In 2001, total population was 31,841,374 in which males were 15,468,614 while females were 16,372,760. Total population of Kerala as per 2011 census is 33,406,061 of which male and female are 16,027,412 and 17,378,649 respectively. As per reliable estimates the live births by sex in 2016 of males are 253962 and of females are 243205. The number of registered female births is lower than that of male births. The matter is of high concern as this may be due to sex selective abortions or female infanticide. Though Kerala has a high level of female literacy the work participation rate of Kerala women is lower compared to many other states. This lower level of work participation in Kerala may be one of the reasons for the high level of sex selective abortions and female infanticide. In Kerala women are highly educated compared to women in other parts of India and are better placed in the society. Life expectancy of women is higher than that of males. This conclusion is drawn under the presumption that employed women will be more independent and may not prefer such activities which tend to reduce the female population as they have their own means to survive their children. Child sex ratio does not show any increasing trend in many districts in Kerala. But the adult sex ratio is on the increase in different years. The low level of child sex ratio may have its implications in future adult sex ratio. The decline in child sex ratio is an indicator of future decline in adult sex ratio and consequent erosion in the improved status of women in Kerala.

III. FINDINGS

1. Increase in still birth of females is not a factor contributing towards a declining child sex ratio.
2. Child sex ratio does not show any increasing trend in many districts in Kerala but is declining in many districts in Kerala.
3. The declining number of live birth of females is the major factor contributing towards decline in the child sex ratio.

RECOMMENDATIONS

IV. CONCLUSION

The analysis of various relevant statistics reveals that the declining number of live birth of females is the major factor contributing towards decline in the child sex ratio and which may be the result of increased sex selective abortions though not visible. Amartya Sen has pointed out that Kerala is an illuminating exception to the situation of missing women in many countries of Asia and North Africa. But if the trend and tendency of child sex ratio is continuing in the manner as discussed earlier it will have its indications and impact on adult sex ratio. In future the adult sex ratio will decline in Kerala also and will have its implications on what the state have achieved in female education, life expectancy and status of women in Kerala. Kerala will no longer be an exception to the phenomenon of “Missing Women”. The policy makers should investigate the real reason for the decline in the child sex ratio and incentives for parents of girl children through different government supportive mechanism should be promoted. There should be strict surveillance of procedures and practices of clinics doing abortions. There should be conscious efforts from the policy makers to enquire into the real reason for the decline in child sex ratio and find solution to the phenomenon.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Sen Amartya, „Missing Women:Social Inequality outweighs women’s survival advantage in Asia and northAfrica”, British Medical Journal ,v304,n6827, 587(2),PP 1992
- [2]. Prakash,B A, „Kerala’s Economic Development: Issues and Problems” , PP Nil,1999 Oommen , M. A, „Essays on Kerala Economy”, pp Nil, 1993 <https://kerala.gov.in/census2011> http://spb.kerala.gov.in/ER2017/web_e/foreword.php <http://niti.gov.in/content/infant-mortality-rate-imr-1000-live-births>
- [3]. http://www.ecostat.kerala.gov.in/images/pdf/publications/Vital_Statistics/data/vital_statistics_2014.
http://www.searo.who.int/entity/health_situation_trends/data/chi/sex-ratio/en/ <https://www.census2011.co.in/sexratio.php>
- [4]. <https://www.mssrf.org/content/declining-sex-ratio-matter-deep-concern-prof-m-s-swaminathan>
http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/4673/14/14_chapter_208.pdf <https://www.thehindu.com>