

Decreasing Daughters: A Declining Child Sex Ratio in Bihar

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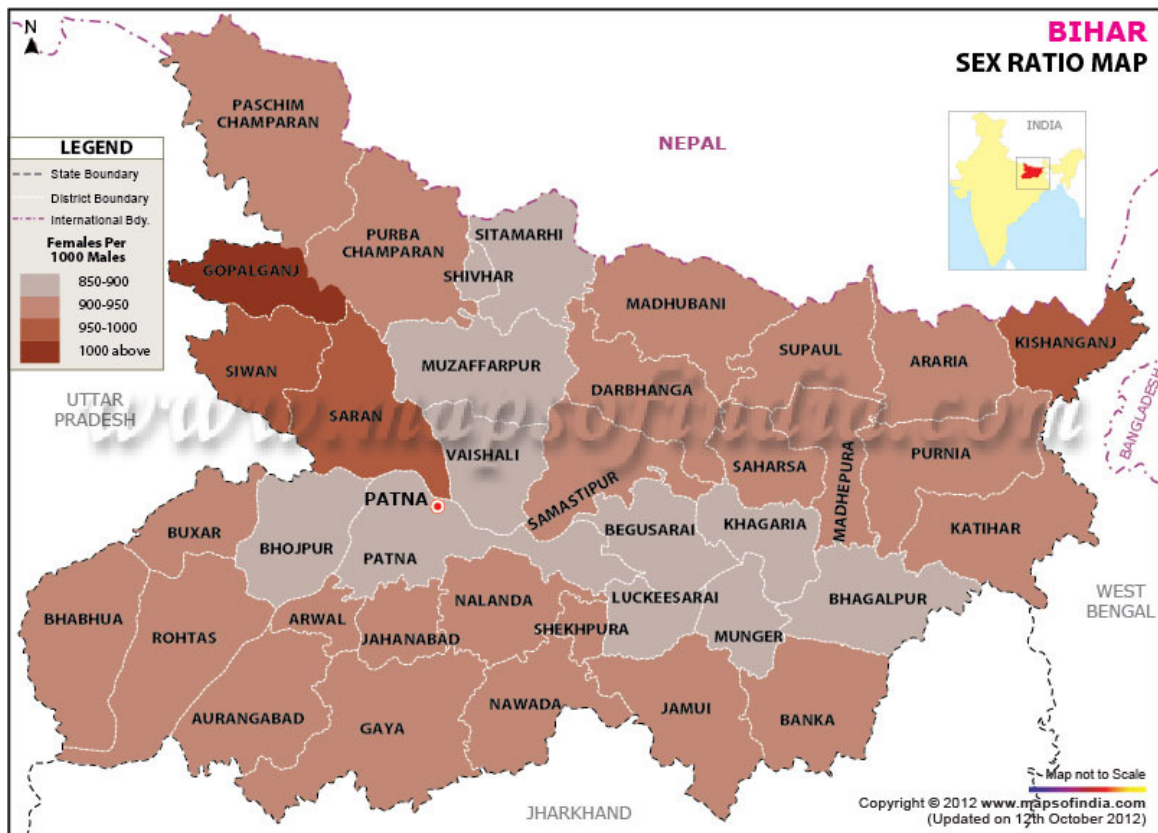
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1. Introduction: The child sex ratio is defined as the number of female per thousand males in age group 0-6 years old. Anyone how can think about the society without daughters, that society, state cannot hold its head high and claim to be part of the civilized society if it discriminates its half the population i.e. women. The child sex ratio (CSR) has been declining faster than overall sex ratio. The decline in the child sex ratio in 2001 and 2011 census is a major cause of concern among the planner demographers and researches. Lower sex ratio among children indicates of more males than females among child population, which may lead to demographic imbalance. The worrying trend of continuous decline in the child sex ratio since census 1961 has not stopped and this census also registered decline from 927 females per thousand males in 2001 to 919 females per thousand males in 2011 according to the census of India. In perspective of Bihar , the child sex ratio was 942 in 2001 and 935 in 2011, the total decline becomes 7. There are areas within the Bihar where the sex ratio has dropped to well below 900 like Vaishali 895, Begusarai 895, Rohtas 981, Sheohar 893, Sitamarhi 899, Khagaria 886, Munger 876, Bhagalpur 880, and Patna 897 according to the census of Bihar2011.

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 in countries like India and China reflected the gross neglect of women. In line of the missing women this paper uses the term decreasing daughter to show the decline child sex ratio in India and also in Bihar. While the decade saw an overall drop in share of children to total

population, daughters are decreasing due to gender discrimination at the time of birth.



Objectives

The objectives of the paper are

1. To show the status of child sex ratio in Bihar districts.
2. To show differential child sex ratio in rural and urban Bihar.
3. Possible reasons behind low child sex ratio in Bihar.

Source of Data

Secondary data have been collected from site of Census of India and Census of Bihar. Data are also collected from various newspaper, articles, research papers and journals etc.

Status of Child Sex Ratio in Bihar

The child sex ratio (CSR) in the country had started to decline continuously since 1961 when it was 976 to 914 in 2011 and also in Bihar decline continuously 942 in 2001 to 935 in 2011.

Table 1

Sl.No.	Districts	0-6 year old Sex Ratio			
		Sex Ratio in 2001	Rank in 2001	Sex Ratio in 2011	Rank in 2011
1	Siwan	934	25	940	14
2	Gopalganj	964	07	954	06
3	Saran	949	14	926	28
4	Nawada	978	01	956	05
5	Madhubani	939	21	936	18
6	Kishanganj	947	15	971	01
7	Gaya	968	02	945	09
8	Aurangabad	943	17	960	03
9	Arwal	920	33	940	15
10	Jahanabad	915	35	944	10
11	Muzaffarpur	928	27	915	36
12	Samastipur	938	22	923	30
13	Lakhisarai	951	12	920	33
14	Vaishali	937	23	904	38
15	Shekhpura	955	10	940	16
16	Supaul	925	29	944	11
17	Katihar	966	05	961	02
18	Jamui	963	08	922	31
19	Purnia	967	03	954	07
20	Araria	963	09	957	04
21	Nalanda	952	18	931	24
22	Madhepura	927	28	930	25

23	Darbhanga	915	36	931	22
24	Begusarai	946	16	919	34
25	Saharsa	912	38	933	20
26	Rohtas	951	13	931	23
27	Banka	965	06	943	12
28	Kaimur	940	19	942	13
29	Buxar	925	30	934	19
30	W. Champanan	953	11	953	08
31	Bhojpur	940	20	918	35
32	E. Champanan	937	24	933	21
33	Sheohar	916	34	929	27
34	Sitamarhi	924	31	930	26
35	Khagaria	932	26	926	29
36	Munger	914	37	922	32
37	Bhagalpur	966	04	938	17
38	Patna	923	32	909	37

Table 2

	Year	Child Sex Ratio (0-6 year old)	Sex Ratio
India	2001	927	933
	2011	919	943
Bihar	2001	942	919
	2011	935	918

Source: Census of India

According to the data from census 2001 and 2011, it reveals that few district wise better CSR were situated in south Bihar at the 2001 census, like Nawada (978), Gaya(968), Bhagalpur(966) and some in

north Bihar like Purnia (967), and Katihar (966) districts. **At the 2011 census, districts list Kishanganj (971), Katihar(961), Aurangabad(960), and Araria (957) are performing almost better than others.** On the other hand, as major concern is declining in number of female child comparable to a male child. Table 2 clearly displays that minimum CSR had found in Saharsa (912), and Munger (914) in 2001, and Vaishali (904), and Patna (909) at the 2011 census. It is interesting to point out here that at 2001, there was a gap of 66 point in the district having maximum and minimum CSR which has increasingly 1 point to become 67 point at the 2011 census.

It is imperative to point out here that the districts having lowest CSR are 912 female child forever 1000 male children as against the highest i.e. 978 female child for every 1000 male child in 2001 census. Similarly, in the census of 2011, the lowest sex ratio was 904 female child per 1000 male child and contrary to this the highest sex ratio was 971 female child for every 1000 male child. Decline in child sex ratio in 0-6 years of age group provides very different picture than that of overall sex ratio in the state.

Table 3 CSR Maximum and Minimum comparison

Child Sex Ratio (CSR)	2001	2011
Maximum	978(Nawada)	971(Kishanganj)
Minimum	912(Saharsa)	904(Vaishali)

The given data clearly reveals that there was a decline of only seven points during census of 2001-2011. At District level, during 2001-2011 period jamui (41), Bhagalpur (28), Gaya (23), and Baka (22) etc. were having high decline i.e. 44, 28, and 22points respectively. Findings from other sources like Annual health survey also reveals the persisting situation across the district within the state and it very clearly pointed out in Table 1. In other to go into minor detail child sex ratio may be discussed at different levels, i.e. sex ratio at birth, sex ratio in 0-4 year's age group and finally 0-6 years of age group.

Considering this decline, the Government of India passed the Prenatal Diagnostic Technology (Regulation and Prevention of

Misuse) or PNDT Act, 1994 banning pre-natal sex determination, which come in force 1996. Despite the Act, the 2011 census has registered only 918 girls per 1000 boys in Bihar.

Differential Child Sex Ratio in Rural and Urban Bihar

The latest census data, 2011 discloses the gender composition of rural and urban population. The data census shows the decline child sex ratio in the whole state and it much lower for urban areas. The child sex ratios of urban (912) are reported as far below the rural (938).

Table 4

	Rural	Urban
Child Sex Ratio (0-6)	938	912
Child Population(0-6)	17383701	1750263

Source: Census of Bihar

With the introduction of better technology for sex selection abortions Bihar's case of decreasing daughters is far more in urban Bihar than in rural Bihar. Easier access to sex determination techniques have to a lower child sex ratio in urban areas.

Reasons behind low child sex ration in India

There are various possible reasons behind the low child sex ratio in India.

Preference for son child

Sons are considered pivotal to family welfare as they are the ones who earn money, continue family lineage and provide a form of old age security for parents. In most regions, sons are desired for reasons related to kinship, inheritance, marriage, identity, status and economic security. A daughter is considered to be a "double los" as she not only leaves her family when she marries, becoming as asset to her new family, but she is also a source of marriage expenses, including the payment of dowry to the groom's family.

Reasons for not wanting girls

The negligible few who wanted daughters mainly did so to fulfill religious obligations (Yadav and Badri, 1997). Srivastava, Dasgupta and Rai (2005) found that rearing a daughter is perceived to be more difficult than bringing up to a son. The major difficulties perceived in bringing up to a boy include: making him economically self-sufficient; keeping him away from bad habits; this responsibilities continuing even after his marriage, towards his children and wife. The problems perceived in bringing up a girl were even greater than for a boy. They included: arranging for her dowry; safeguarding for her chastity; and socializing the daughter for the future role as daughter-in – law.

Yadav and Badri (1997) found that pregnant women were pressurized more by their husbands than the mother-in-law to bear a male child even if they already have two living children, one son and a daughter. The level of anxiety of pregnant women with only daughters was rated very high.

The reasons stated by the majority for getting the sex determination test done were for avoiding the problem associated with a girl child such as dowry. Parents feel that finding a suitable and good match for a daughter is difficult, otherwise life can become hell. Another belief parents have that they should not expect support from daughters during old age and this also makes the girl child unwanted (Prasad, 2001). The various reasons for not wanting daughters were: dowry, forbidding wedding expenses, long requirement of giving gifts and money to daughters, lack of availability of girls to look after parents after marriage, domestic violence, ill treatment of women after they give birth to a girl, and not wanting to go through the same fate as them (Ministry of Health and Family Malware, 2002; and Nayer, 1995).

Other reasons

- **Patriarchy**- Low women's social status and social position
- **Religious directions**- Rights of son in Rituals of birth, death, marriage etc.
- **Social evils**- Dowry, Lack of assets/property.
- **Domestic violence against women**- Socially accepted actions.

Conclusion

In view of the paper summarized above we may conclude that the position of child sex ratio in Bihar is not satisfactory. The child sex ratio is declining continuously after independence and it has reached to ever low to 914 in 2011. Bihar's skewed child sex ratio figures are indeed unfortunate and alarming. In most of economically developed district the condition of child sex ratio is not satisfactory. In urban area child sex ratio is lower than in rural area. There are various factors related to low child sex ratio in Bihar mainly are the preference of son because of social and cultural factors. Many other factors attributed to the declined in the number of girls child, female infanticides and female feticide. Sex selective abortions have been greatly facilitated by the misuse of diagnostic procedures such as amniocentesis that can determine the sex of the fetus. Ministry of health and Family Malware has undertaken several measures to implement the 'Pre conception and Pre Natal Diagnostic Technique Act'. The act provides for the prohibition of sex selection and for the prevention of misuse of diagnostic techniques for determination leading to female feticide. Still sex determination activities are carrying out in many clinics.

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