

## Youth's Attitude towards Declining Sex Ratio: A Case Study of Shirur Tahsil, District Pune, Maharashtra

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### Abstract

Sex ratio is a significant demographic and cultural index. Balanced sex ratio represents the attitude and mentality of the society which is one of the indicators of the ultimate social development. Fertility, mortality, migration, literacy, traditions, culture, socio-economic conditions, customs, traditions, standard of living etc. are the various determinants of the sex ratio.

Gender differences and inequality is a current global issue. Customs, traditions are so rigid in the male dominated rural and patriarchal culture area. But nowadays, the active involvement and devotion of women are taking into consideration in the shifting of social practices. Youth's attitude towards the female is one of the affecting factors of sex ratio which causes many changes to maintain the development of the society. The main aim of this paper is to analyze youth's attitude towards the declining sex ratio in Shirur Tahsil of Pune District, Maharashtra. Questionnaire and interview methods were applied to know youth's attitudes and their thoughts about the gender equality, sensation of males and females who are belonging to the age group 16 to 22 years. The census data of 2011 was obtained through the Village and Town Directory of Pune District 2011. MS-Excel was applied for the processing of primary and secondary data and for the graphical representation.

The lowest sex ratio is recorded in Talegaon Dhamdhare Circle while the highest sex ratio is observed in Pabal Circle. 95 percent youth agreed the present situation of rapidly declining sex ratio but only 31 percent youth expressed the standard number of male and female to maintain the balancing the sex ratio. Approximately 45 percent youth is ignorant of the long term effects of declining sex ratio. 53.18 percent youth expressed that the social causes are more powerful than other causes. 23.77 youth opined that the daughters' marriage is burden for the parents while 9.54 percent youth agreed that the tendency of sex determination and female foeticide were the main causes of declining sex ratio. 86 percent youth expressed that the daughters are more caring and responsible than sons and 89 percent youths and parents agreed that its better to have girl child than boy child.

**KEYWORDS :** Youth's Attitude, Sex ratio, Sex determination, Female foeticide

### Introduction:

Indian society is a male dominating society where son being responsible for the carrying forward the family name, support in old-age and for performing the last rites. In case of daughter, she is treated as an object to fulfill the desire of men, as an economic liability, 'parayadhan' and encouraged to be homebound and shy. Nowadays increasing son preference, sex selection, norms of family size, neglect of daughters are so familiar in the technological developing period. It is truthful that without women development the survival of human race will remain elusive.

The sex ratio is important demographic component for the human development (Aktar, 2013). It reflects the socio-economic conditions prevailing in an area and is a useful tool for regional analysis (Franklin, 1956). The issue of declining female-male ratio is multifaceted and there is no simple explanation for it (Sayeed, 2009). Several researchers have examined the historical trends and factors affecting the female to male ratios (Agnihotri 1995, 2000; Bhat 2002a and 2002b; Clarke 2000; Dandekar 1975; Guillot 2002; Mayer 1999; Visaria 1971). It is an important social indicator to measure the extent of prevailing equity between males and females at a given point of them. Here an attempt has been made to assess the role of youth's attitude in the present situation of declining sex ratios.

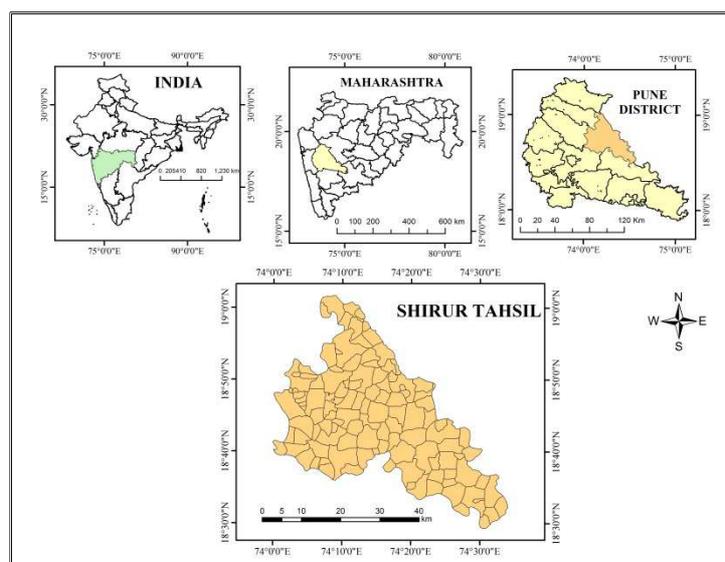
### Study Area:

Shirur Tahsil of Pune District is selected for the present research work. Shirurtahsil occupies eastern place in Pune district of Maharashtra State. It lies entirely in Ghodnadi and Bhimabasin and extends between  $18^{\circ}50''$  N to  $19^{\circ}02''$  N latitude and  $74^{\circ}01''$  E to  $74^{\circ}57''$  E longitudes, comprising an area of 1651.30 sq. km. The study area is included in Survey of India Topographic Index Numbers 47J/1, 47J/2, 47J/5, 47J/6, 47J/10 and 47J/11 on 1 : 50,000.

This tahsil is confined by Ahmadnagar District to east and north-east, ShirurTahsil to west, Ambegaontahsil to north-west and Haveli tahsil to South. Shirurtahsil is divided into six circles, namely Pabal, Shirur, Takali-Haji, TalegaonDhamdhere, Nhavara and Vadgaon-Rasai and covering 117 villages. It is located between Pune and Ahmadnagar District and so well connected by State Highway no.60.

As per census data of 1991, 2001 and 2011, Shirurtahsil as a whole had 1039, 935 and 916 sex ratio respectively. It is observed that sex ratio of the study area is continuously

**Fig. no. 1 : Location Map of Shirur Tahsil**



declining during the span of 20 years. According to 2011 census, the sex ratio of Pune District was 915, Velhetahsil had the highest sex ratio of 982 and Haveli tahsil

recorded the lowest sex ratio. Shirur tahsil ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in sex ratio. Among Shirur tahsil, the highest sex ratio found in Pabal Circle (969) and lowest in Talegaon Dhamdhare Circle (884).

### **Objectives:**

1. To analyze Shirur Tahsil's sex ratio characteristics in 2011.
2. To assess youth's attitude towards gender preference for their family size and composition, declining sex ratio, its causes and effects.
3. To know the remedies to balance the sex ratio with special reference to Shirur Tahsil of Pune District.

### **Database and Methodology:**

Present research work is based on questionnaire and interview surveys. For the detail analysis of youth's attitude, 1700 questionnaires were filled from boys and girls belonging to 16 to 22 years age groups. All these respondents are of the different faculties such as Arts, Commerce, Science and Professional Education. Out of 117 villages, the survey covered 77 villages and 35 castes of 5 categories. Population data of 2011 was obtained through the Village and Town Directory of Pune District 2011. MS-Excel was applied to process the primary and secondary data and to represent in the form of graphs.

### **Sex Ratio of Shirur Tahsil in 2011:**

The sex composition of a population is expressed in terms of sex ratio i. e. number of female per thousand of males. As per the census data of 2011, the sex ratio of Pune district was 915. Among the tahsils of Pune District, Velhetahsil had the highest sex ratio of 982 and Haveli Tahsil recorded the lowest sex ratio. The overall sex ratio of Shirur tahsil was 916 females per 1000 males. Shirur Tahsil is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in sex ratio. Shirur Rural had recorded 920 females per 1000 males while Shirur Urban had only 896 females per 1000 males. Among the circles of Shirur Tahsil, the highest sex ratio was observed in Pabal Circle and that was 969 females per 1000 males and it is due to lack of transportation facilities, low literacy etc. The lowest sex ratio was recorded in Talegaon Dhamdhare Circle because this circle has Shikrapur (888), Sanaswadi (829) and Koregaon Bhima (817) urban areas with high literacy, transportation connectivity by SH 60 to Pune and Aurangabad road, availability of health services, management and professional educational institutions etc.

### **Causes of Declining Sex Ratio:**

As per the primary survey, it has been attempted to know the causes of declining sex ratio in study area. It is observed that 95 percent youth knows the present condition of rapidly declining sex ratio but 45 percent youth doesn't know the effects of declining sex ratio.

It is a severe question that youth should be aware about the balance or standard sex ratio. It should be minimum 950 females per 1000 males. But in study area only 31 percent youth expressed the standard number of male and female to maintain the balancing the sex ratio. There are many factors behind the declining sex

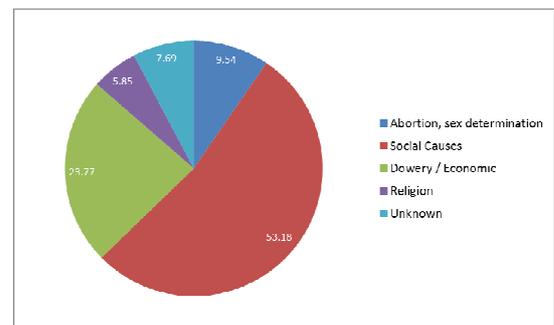
ratio such as education, poverty, male dominancy, lack of women empowerment, social status of women and finally thinking of human being etc. (Gosavi). Table no. 1 shows that the major causes of declining sex ratio and these are social causes, economic causes, tendency towards sex determination and female foeticide and religious causes.

**Social Causes:**

It is observed that in study area social causes such as patriarchal culture, superstitions, traditions and customs, gender inequality, the preference for male child, insecurity, religion, caste etc. are the main causes. Son preference is a traditional belief that a parent cannot reach the heavenly gates without a son. Dasgupta (2005) has proved that there has been a strong on preference and the sex ratio is closely related to the sex composition of children already born in the family. These causes are more effective in ShirurTahsil due to the most concentration of rural population. 53 percent of youth accepted that the social causes are more powerful than the other causes.

**Table no.1 and Fig. No. 2 : Causes of Declining Sex Ratio**

Sr. No.	Causes of Declining Sex Ratio	% of Respondents
1	Abortion, sex determination	9.54
2	Social Causes	53.18
3	Dowry / Economic	23.77
4	Religion	5.85
5	Unknown	7.69



**Religion:**

In India, marriage is a social institution and a religious duty. Hence, religion expects every couple to have at least a son and a daughter. The birth of a son is essential for the salvation of Hindu parents and the marriage (Kanyadan) of a daughter is a religious and social obligation. This is more in rural area than the urban area. 5.85 percent thought that religion is one of the basic causes of decreasing female numbers. 7.69 percent youth were ignorant about the causes of declining sex ratio.

**Economic causes:**

In Indian culture, it is believed that daughter’s marriage brings the godly blessings to the parents. So daughter’s marriage is considered as a responsibility of daughter’s parent. Caste-wise the expenditure of daughter’s marriage is different. 23.77 youth said that dowry system is one of the economic reasons of the declining number of females. 95 percent youth spoken that dowry system is illegal and was the main cause behind the female harassment.

## Sex Determination and Abortion:

The development in medical and health facilities is also partially responsible in the fluctuation of female numbers. It includes sex determination tests and selective female foeticide etc. The chance of sex selective is higher in study area which is major cause of declining sex ratio. The main reason is female infanticide where females are not allowed to born given the misunderstanding that females are looked upon as burden by the parents (Yallatti, 2012). The surveyed showed that 9.54 percent respondents opined that the sex ratio is declined due to the sex determination and female foeticide.

## Effects of Declining Sex Ratio:

The imbalance in male and female population will create long term effects in the future of society. Social, economic and community life are affected in many by a large imbalance in sex composition (Gatade, 2012). Changes in sex composition largely reflect the underlying socio-economic and cultural pattern of a society in different ways (Phule, 2013). Many problems such as problems of life partner, imbalance of male and female, crimes, disturbed mentality, absence of love, abnormal mentality in youth will be raised due to declining sex ratio.

**1. Crimes:** Deficit in girl child population leads to serious demographic and adverse social consequences. Table no. 2 shows that out of the total respondents 15.38 percent respondents said that the declining number of females will be raised the insecurity for female in society and crimes against women will be increased in future.

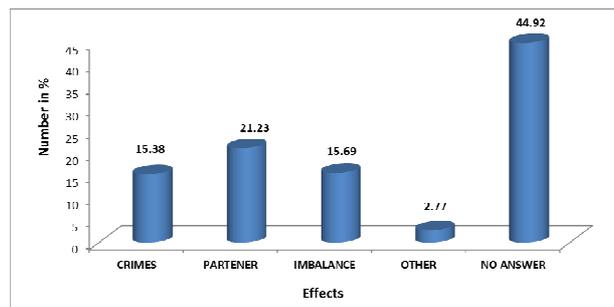
**2. Problems of life Partner:** Deficit in girl child population leads to serious demographic and adverse social consequences (Kour, 2013). 21.23 percent respondents informed that a deficit or shortage of brides or life partner is the serious problem of future. It is also observed that the upper caste group is now experiencing this problem. Daughters may choose their bridegroom and daughters may demand dowry to son's parent.

**3. Imbalance of Male and Female Ratio:** Too many male and few female will be seen in the society. The imbalance of male and female number will be upraised. It is agreed by 15.69 percent respondents. Shortage of girls is one of the obvious consequences of the continued skewed sex ratio would be shortage of brides. Without women, development and the survival of human race will remain elusive. It will disturb the equilibrium of nature and destroy our moral and social fabric. It could lead to increase violence against women and onset of practices such as polyandry.

**Table no. 2 and Fig. No. 3: Effects of Declining Sex Ratio**

Sr. No.	Effects of Declining Sex Ratio	% of Respondents
1	Crimes	15.38
2	Problems of Partner	21.23
3	Imbalance of Male and	15.69

	Female	
4	Other	2.77
5	No Answer or Unknown	44.92



**4. Unknown:**It is also detected that 45 percent of youth’s do not thinking about the present situation of declining sex ratio and its effects.

**Remedies for Balancing the Sex Ratio:**

Table no. 3 depicted that change in attitude, ban on sex determination and female foeticide, awareness programmes are the best remedies to maintain the balance of male and female population.

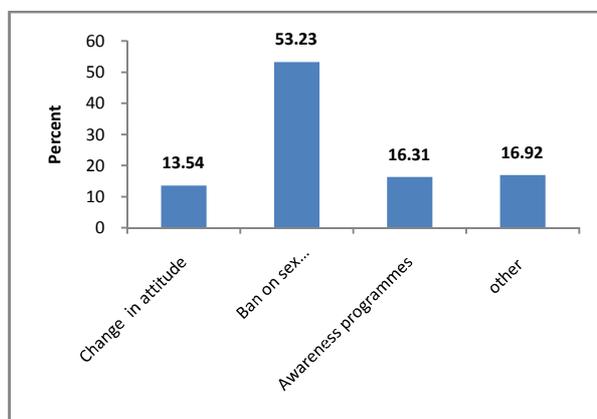
**1. Change in Attitude:**

According to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, “ If you want me to tell you what a nation is like, or what a social organization is like, tell me the position of women in that country”. Gender equality is one of the life skills of Indians. The status should be given to women’s like the developed countries. 13.54 respondents thought that the change in attitude is one of the important remedies. The respondents expressed that the change in attitude means not only the attitude towards the female child, but that is in the demand of dowry system, daughters equal share in parents’ property and reduce the importance to the cultural construct of a son preference. Such change will show a long term change in the gender equality, sensitivity and scientific view of life skills in youth and the society.

**2. Ban on Sex Determination and Female Foeticide:**Study area had the highest sonographycentres (60) and therefore 53.23 percent youth opined that sex determination and female foeticide are the main reasons of declining sex ratio in the study area. Keeping watch and taking legal action on those private doctors who are involved in “Kill the Baby Girl”.

**Table No. 3 and Fig. No. 4 : Remedies for Balancing the Sex Ratio**

Sr. No.	Remedies	Respondents ( Percents)
1	Change in Attitude	13.54
2	Ban on Sex Determination, Female Foeticide	53.23
3	Awareness Programme	16.31
4	Others	16.92



**3. Awareness Programmes:** 16.31 percent youths said that the awareness programmes are required to make change in the mindsets of the parents through Special Awareness Programmes, Information Education and Communication, Law and moral Education etc. There is an urgent need for social attitude transformation among women, especially in rural and urban areas where women illiteracy level is high. Girls are seen as **ASSET** than **LIABILITY**.

**4. Others:** Other causes include Sex Education, Implementation of laws, education of Law, Techniques and skills of Self-protection and security, special facilities etc. 16.92 percent youths concentrated on these causes of declining sex ratio.

### **Conclusion:**

1. As per 2011 census data, the lowest sex ratio is recorded in TalegaonDhamdhare Circle due to the availability of health, education and transportation facilities while the highest sex ratio is observed in Pabal Circle. The main reasons are the small and remote villages, the scarcity of transportation, health and education services.

2. 95 percent youth agreed the present situation of rapidly declining sex ratio but only 31 percent youth expressed the standard number of male and female to maintain the balancing the sex ratio.

3. In study area, approximately 45 percent youth is ignorant of the long term effects of declining sex ratio. It indicates the change in youths attitude towards female and the awareness about the declining sex ratio is very essential.

4. 53.18 percent youth expressed that the social causes such as patriarchal culture, traditions and customs, son preference are more powerful than other causes.

4. 23.77 youth opined that the daughters' marriage is burden for the parents while 9.54 percent youth agreed that the tendency of sex determination and female foeticide were the main causes of declining sex ratio.

5. 86 percent youth expressed that the daughters are more caring and responsible than sons and 89 percent youths and parents agreed that it's better to have girl child than boy child.

### **Suggestions:**

1. Gender Equality, equal share to daughter in Parents' wealth should be practiced to change the attitude of the youths'.

2. Sex Education, Law and moral education, special awareness programmes should be conducted for the 16 to 22 years age groups youths.

2. Self-protection and security training should be given to the girls. 3. Strict legal action should be taken on the sonography centres of sex determination and girl baby foeticide. The District collectors should be take legal action on the illegal sonography centres.

3. Promoting the "Save the baby girls" through NSS, NCC, Girl Stage Forum, Poster Exhibition and Debate Competitions etc.

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