

**Awareness Gaps: The Case Regarding Sex Ratio in a Female Deficit
Region of Haryana in India**

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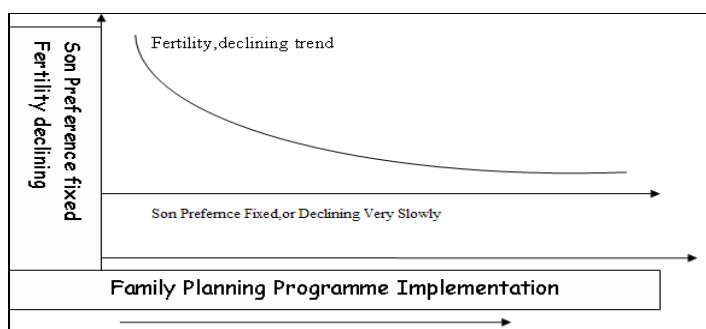
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Awareness Gaps: The Case Regarding Sex Ratio in a Female Deficit Region of Haryana India

1.0 Introduction

An indirect outcome of aspirations for self-regulation of population has been the highly adverse sex ratio in the North Indian states. Punjab has a child (0-6 yrs) sex ratio (CSR,) of 793 girls per 1000 boys; Haryana 819; Chandigarh 798 and Delhi 828 (Census of India, 2001). Given the national reality that the families want to have smaller family, either voluntarily due to economic reasons (such as desire for a better standard of living, or due to incentives provided by the local government) or out of compulsion to abide by the two child norm, which way will the decision for family sex composition go? Son preference largely remaining the same, it may be postulated, the girl child is likely to be sacrificed, as shown in the conceptual figure 1.1. This being the context, the present study examines the male perspectives on sex ratio decline.

Fig 1.1 Influence of Son Preference on Family Sex Composition



NFHS 3 establishes that son preference (at least one son) in Haryana has remained 88% in NFHS-1(1992-93), went up to 90% in NFHS-2 (1998-99) and was 87% in NFHS-3 (2005-06) amongst ever married women. Interestingly, son preference amongst men was 75% as against 83% for women whereas preference for at least one daughter was 77% amongst women as against 69.7% for men. The son preference was relatively more amongst the poorer people, the SCs, and the Muslims and in rural areas (85% for women and 70% for men) compared to the urban areas(78% for women and 68.5% for men). But it is much less at 64% amongst the never married as compared to 81% amongst the currently married in Haryana. At the same time the fertility has come down from 2.6 in NFHS-1 to 2.5 in NFHS-2 and 2.3 in NFHS-3 for ever married women (NFHS-3,2008).

1.1 The Ray of Hope: Youth

Youth (10-24 years) constitute 30% of India's population. Among significant changes regarding the status of youth, gradual narrowing of the gender gap in secondary school enrolment has been prominent in India (60 girls per 100 boys in 1990 to 81 girls per 100 boys in 2004). Correspondingly labour

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force participation of adolescents is reducing as they spend more time in school. Child marriage has also declined worldwide and in India (2005), the percentage of ever-married girls below 19 was 34% as against only 6% of the males (Population Reference Bureau, 2006). The youth become and will remain important because India is adding 29 children per minute or 15,402,000 children per annum. Surely when these children grow up in just 20 years from now, they will, as many are already asking, ask as to what the Nation has to offer them for a future. So may be the time has come for direct action as youths are the ones who are likely to suffer most from the long-term consequences of the adverse sex ratio, it is presumed that they are will take a genuine interest in a social movement for improving the current sex ratio. The question arises as to what are the solutions, which can be recommended assertively to the youth. The Youth consist of young people in the age group 15-35 years. But the most impressionable age regarding sexual matters seems to be 'Adolescence' (10-19 years) as it is called. Study after study points out to the crying need for research on Youth/Adolescents in Indian context. This paper concentrates on assessing the approach of youth and the adolescents and work out desirable strategies for these two groups.

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1.2 Enticing the Males?

As far as research on fertility is concerned, the male perspective has also been largely ignored by researchers. "Husbands were interviewed in only seven percent of world fertility surveys. Again, they were interviewed in only 33 percent of Demographic and Health Surveys in progress or completed until 1993. A 40-year analysis of POPLINE graph has led experts to conclude that men are neglected in research on fertility and family planning". Moreover, there has been a "genderisation of family planning responsibilities" with tubectomies, accounting for 96 percent of the same. Government sponsored programmes have conveniently overlooked the fact that procreation is the result of an equal and active role of both the partners. Encouraging male responsibility has largely remained only an "idea"(Sachar, 2006). This study concentrates on males therefore.

1.3 Choosing Haryana

This paper ~~econcentrates on~~concentrates on Haryana as it is a ~~developed~~ developed state of Indian union, with unfavourable demographic characteristics. Further, ~~developing, developing~~ a perspective for Haryana could ~~be useful~~be useful for other ~~states in~~states in Hindi heartland. Haryana had a child sex ratio (in 2001) of 819 (Kerala 964) and IMR of 59 per 1000 (Kerala 11), birth rate 26.3 (Kerala 16.7) and death rate of 7.1(Kerala 6.3) (SRS-2003, 2005). It is also interesting to note that the female IMR is 65 and the male IMR is only 54 (total 59) which is an indicator of female foeticide or neglect. The table 1.1 is an indicative comparison of Haryana and India.

Table 1.1 Vital Statistics Haryana and India

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Indicator/Year		1981	1991	2001
Birth Rate	Haryana	36.5	33.1	23.1
	India	33.2	29.5	24.8
Death Rate	Haryana	11.3	8.2	8.1
	India	12.5	9.8	9.7

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IMR	Haryana	101	68	56.8
	India	110	80	67.6
TFR	Haryana	5	4	2.88
	India	4.5	3.6	2.85
CPR	Haryana	28.3	56.6	62.4
	India	22.3 (1980)	44.1	48.2

Source: <http://haryanahealth.nic.in/familywelfare.doc>

The Table 1.2 shows severe and worsening male dominance that prevails in rural Haryana. This study attempts a data based analysis of factors resulting in lower sex ratio (defined as females per 1000 males). Almost 27% villages have an over 25% deficit of girls and another almost 50 % have 10-25% deficit which is a serious matter.

Table 1.2 Sex Ratio (0-6 years) in Haryana Villages

Sex Ratio	No. Of Villages		DIFF.	Percentage	
	2001	1991		2001	1991
<750	1852	977	875	27.4	13.7
751-900	3359	3142	217	49.66	44.1
900-1000	1057	1818	-761	15.6	25.5
1001-1200	367	949	-582	5.4	13.3
>1201	129	239	-110	1.9	3.4

Source: Census of Haryana 2001 Paper 2

1.4 Research Objectives

The research objectives are:

- To document and understand the current perception (knowledge and attitude) and behaviour of youth regarding sex ratio, sex selection, and the prospects of unmarried males.
- To document and understand the factors that affect/shape the prevalent perception.
- To explain and correlate the variation in prevalent perceptions on sex ratio and the prospects of unmarried males in relation to selected socio-economic background characteristics of the youth.
- To link the current perception and the KAP regarding sex ratio and the prospects of unmarried males so as to develop some social communication and facilitation strategies to overcome existing biases and gaps.

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions that follow from the above research objectives posed in the exercise are as follows:

- What is the knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) regarding sex ratio and regarding unmarried males?
- Do the youth think changing sex ratio is an issue, and if so in what manner will it affect them?
- What influences sex ratio, and how?
- What should be done on the sex ratio issue and how?
- Is the society preparing itself for the future unmarried males?

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1.6 Sampling and Study Methods

The present work is based on primary data collected through survey research method in the State of Haryana covering both rural and urban areas. The sample for the study was drawn from four districts in the state namely Ambala, Panchkula, Bhiwani, and Mewat. The urban sample is in approximate proportion (30 percent) to the share of urban population in the state. The study sample (429 male youth respondents) was drawn from two distinct regions representing developed and developing districts in the state. The districts of Ambala and Panchkula represent developed regions of the state while Mewat and Loharu (Bhiwani) are relatively most backward areas. Prominent social institutions such as Polytechnics, Industrial Training Institutes (ITI), College, and Youth Club (in governmental as well as non-governmental sectors) and located in the selected districts were identified, which acted as sampling frame. Developed district here can be said to be from the point of literacy levels, amenities and various other factors, which were clubbed into a composite index, based on Census 2001 data and Ambala and Panchkula were amongst the highest scoring districts on that index whereas Bhiwani and the Mewat region were among the lowest scoring regions (Gulati, 2005). Interestingly, DLHS 2007-08 shows that Ambala and Panchkula have the lowest number of Mean children ever born by district at 2.4 compared to Bhiwani (2.8) and Mewat (4.1),both at the highest end.

Non-probabilistic convenience sampling approach was used to interview 429 youth, 179 from the two developed districts and 240 from the two backward districts. ~~=Detailed personal~~ Detailed personal face-to-face interviews were carried out through questionnaires in cordial and friendly settings resulting in prompt, honest, and appropriate response. In case of difficulties faced by the respondents in understanding the questionnaires, the questions were read out and explained to the respondents. The questions were in Hindi and there was no time bar on filling up of the questionnaire. The period of data collection was the first and second week of February 2006 in Ambala, Panchkula and Bhiwani districts and in August in Mewat area. The gaps noticed were covered in the detailed personal interviews conducted by the researcher. The personal interviews were carried out in Aug and September, 2006 in all the areas over the weekends.

Convenience sampling approach was used for picking parents/others to ensure representation of generally known categories of people who had college going sons or brothers or were themselves in the marriageable age group. 22 persons were picked up from amongst the better-developed districts and another 22 from among the lesser developed districts. In depth interview were conducted by means of printed structured

questionnaire/guidelines, which were entered in by the researcher on his own as the respondents answered various questions or engaged in conversation. On an average, each interview lasted about 90 to 120 minutes.

1.7 Data Processing and Analysis

The information needs of the exercise were met from Primary as well as secondary sources. The secondary sources of data were Census, NFHS, and NSSO and other studies conducted elsewhere. The following categories of variables were culled from the survey-based data.

Knowledge Variables

- Knowledge regarding sex: formal sex education and Informal sex education
- Variables associated with Carrying Capacity of village/town
- Perceived normal family size
- Decision-maker on family size: father/ mother/ grandparents /self/ caste elders
- Perceived normal family composition.
- Decision-maker on family composition: father/mother/grandparents/self/caste elders
- Media-graphic variables such as Hours spent on TV/Video/Newspapers etc.
- Other variables

Attitude Variables

- Desired normal family size and family composition
- Suggested means for media exposure in the town/village
- Other variables

Practice Variables

- Actual average family size and composition
- actual educational levels of unmarried men
- media exposure in the town/village and other variables

_____ Specific statistical techniques used in the paper are descriptive analysis, interdependence analysis, ANOVA, correlation and regression, paired t-test and ~~other methods~~ other methods.

2.0 FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

2.1 Background Characteristics

The respondents are all males belonging to four districts namely Panchkula (25.1%) and Ambala (16.9%), which are the forward districts and Bhiwani (37.2%) and Mewat (20.8%) which are the backward districts. The rural and urban break up of the

sample turns out to be 25.2% urban and 74.8% rural which is representative of state population. The age-wise break up of male youth respondents shows that 32% were adolescents while 98.4% respondents fit in the category of youth (15-35 years) and only 1.6% were above that age.

The Place of Residence

Analysis shows that 85.8 % respondents lived in own houses while 8.8 % lived in rented premises and 2.4% in hostel and 3.1 % elsewhere. Further, only 4.4% respondents said that they were migrants and the rest said that they were local residents or students. The respondents normally stay with the family (90.6%), while 5.9% stayed alone and 3.0% stayed in groups. Almost 27% of the families were nuclear while 72% respondents reported to be living in joint families. ~~These living arrangements could have a bearing on their sexual behaviour and ultimately family composition.~~

The **marital status** of respondents shows that 73% were unmarried while 27% were married of which 2.1 % without *Gauna* (cohabitation) and rest 24.6% with cohabitation. The District-wise cross-tabulation of data shows that the percentage of married respondents in the backward districts of Bhiwani and Mewat were 66.0% and 17.9% of the total instances of married as compared to only 1% in Ambala and 15% in Panchkula which in some sense reflects eagerness to marry in the backward districts.

The **religion** wise classification of data shows that while 82.5% respondents were Hindus, 13.7% were Muslims, 3.1% Sikhs and 0.7% Christians in the sample. Non-respondents were 1.2% only which shows that religion is a vital information which few want to miss giving. Of the respondents, 16.4% were SC, 17.1% OBC and 65.3% were general category so the **caste** representation was fairly realistic and in tune with the share of SCs in Haryana, which is 19.35 %, and Muslims (5.78%) as per Census 2001.

The Educational Level Attained

The age group wise literacy data collected in Census 2001 indicates a literacy of 75.7% in the age groups under consideration here. A study of the current level of education of the respondents reveals that 1% are under primary, 7.5% of them are under-matric, 5.8% are its, 13.7% are under class XII, 56.4% are upto and under-graduates and 3.21 % are doing or past graduates while 12.5% are in professional courses (Diploma in Engg.)

When does one become 'Educated'

Here it would be interesting to note that an attempt was made to ask the parents as to whom did they consider as 'educated' and what minimum level of education would make a difference in thinking of the youth. The answer generally was at least a graduate, though some percentage said even XIIth pass was functionally different from others not so educated. Our study largely points out the graduation or the professional qualification as the turning point in terms of being 'educated'.

The Socio-Economic Variables

Grounded theory based research has shown that the availability or otherwise of amenities has a significant bearing on the status and thus the demand for women. It not

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only affects the sex ratio but also ultimately affects the age at marriage and family composition. A study on the availability of basic amenities like bathroom, toilet, safe drinking water, fuel used for cooking, availability of electricity etc. has shown that these factors have a significant bearing not only on the status of women but also on the marriage market as any body who can afford, would not like to marry their daughter to a family in an area which lacks basic amenities. This also has the potential to impact sex ratio in the long run (Gulati, 2005). [More women with a bad childhood experience were found to experience abortion with reference to women with a good childhood experience \(Agrawal S and Unisa S., 2002\).](#)

The analysis of data on district-wise availability of bath rooms and toilets, shows that in both rural and urban areas the forward districts have more of these available in the homes compared to the backward districts. The urban-rural disparity is much more marked in Mewat where it is almost 48% compared to 4% difference in Panchkula with respect to availability of bathrooms. Proximate availability of clean drinking water is a major feminine concern. Only 64% of the houses overall, 85% urban and 57% rural households get water 'at home'. The position in the rural areas is obviously worse as far as the womenfolk are concerned, who have to fetch water from long distances (22% going over half a kilometre daily in the rural backward districts) day after day in what can be called the biggest drudgery of independent India. The burden increases due to time and energy the rural women in Haryana have to spend on **animal husbandry**, which is a major subsidiary occupation. As such 48% respondents had cattle in the areas surveyed.

Media Access: At least 76.2% of the households had TV sets in contrast to 69.6% possessing radios (39 % as per Census 2001). The radio is present in 71.6% urban and 68.9% of rural households. Understandably, the penetration of radio in rural Mewat is higher than the TV at 59% while it is a respectable 67% in Bhiwani as well. In urban Mewat 87% of the households have access to radio as against 68.4% in Panchkula and 75% in Ambala.

Regarding personal communication, the telephone and mobile have almost caused a revolution in the country, and this is very evident among the respondents with 75.7% having access to such facility. This obviously also has a lot to do with youth power and the needs of 'youth on the move'. Overall 87% of urban respondents have mobiles/phones, 72% of rural respondents also have the access to them. Even in rural Mewat, this percentage is a high 67%.

2.2 Existing Children of Married Couples

In all there were 106 married ~~respondents~~respondents, of which 70 reported that they were, at the time of interview, living with their wife. The number of total children reported by these couples comes to 99. The first child is 'girl' for 56% cases but the second child is 'boy' for 78% cases. It is very well a guess as to whether this is by chance or by design.

It was very interesting indeed to study people who already had at least two children and though the numbers are small, only one out of 28 persons had two daughters. Others had a second boy or a first boy and some also both boys. This is the

ground reality be it the backward Bhiwani and Mewat or the forward Panchkula. The difference noticed was that in the backward Bhiwani and Mewat the respondents were clear that one boy is not enough. My respondent in interview said that they say locally “*Ek aankh ko ke kholle ke Meeche?*” i.e. ‘for a one eyed person has no choice to open which eye and close which one’? Therefore, they keep trying even after one male. His estimate was that 80 % want at least one male issue while 20% want at least two males. It is common knowledge that the need for a son has influenced family size which thus affects the sex ratio but has sex ratio has in turn influenced the family size?

2.3 Concept of Ideal Family Size in Rural/Urban and Developed/Backward Areas

The ideal family reported by rural persons includes three or more children for 29.5% families as compared to 19% families in urban areas. Surprisingly one child is equally popular in rural and urban contexts as shown by the Chi-square test. The test also showed that 80% of the respondents in the developed districts prefer 1 or 2 kids as compared to 68% in backward districts (where 32% still want 3 or more kids).

Table 2.1 Ideal Family Size in Rural/Urban & Developed/Backward Areas

Ideal No of Kids		Urban / Rural (a6)			Dev. Distt.:Pkl+Amb/ Backward:Bh+Mewat		
		Urban	Rural	Total	Pkl+ Amb	Bh+ Mewat	Total
Category of Ideal No of Kids (a87Cat)							
1 Kid	N	5	14	19	11	8	19
% within Ideal No. of Kids		26.3	73.7	100.0	57.9	42.1	100.0
% within R-U or Dev/Back Distt		6.3	6.4	6.4	8.5	4.7	6.4
% of Total		1.7	4.7	6.4	3.7	2.7	6.4
2 Kids	N	59	141	200	92	108	200
% within Ideal No. of Kids		29.5	70.5	100	46	54	100
% within R-U or Dev/Back Distt		74.7	64.1	66.9	71.3	63.5	66.9
% of Total		19.7	47.2	66.9	30.8	36.1	66.9
3 or More kids	N	15	65	80	26	54	80
% within Ideal No. of Kids		18.8	81.3	100.0	32.5	67.5	100.0
% within R-U or Dev/Back Distt		19.0	29.5	26.8	20.2	31.8	26.8
% of Total		5.0	21.7	26.8	8.7	18.1	26.8
Total	N	79	220	299	129	170	299
% within Ideal No. of Kids		26.4	73.6	100.0	43.1	56.9	100
% within R-U or Dev/Back Distt		100	100	100	100	100	100
% of Total		26.4	73.6	100.0	43.1	56.9	100

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A study on active and passive elimination of girl child also establishes that presence of a son as well as desire for a small family are most significant for abortion among women in rural Haryana. Women not having a male child were almost three times more likely to experience abortion than women having one male child (Agrawal S and Unisa S., 2002).

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2.4 Impact of Religion on Family Size and Composition

It is interesting to see whether the “number of children generally” has any relation to “religion”. The total number of children per household generally came close to 3.4 (S.D. 2.3) while the average number of children of Hindus were 2.83 (S.D. 1.57),

Muslims 6.69 (S.D. 3.03), Christians 2.0 (S.D. 0), Sikhs 2.4 (S.D. 0.51). Naturally, this shows the religion where maximum work is needed in terms of motivation for raising age at marriage, birth spacing to achieve small, but better families.

The 'status of women affecting sex ratio' outcome could be seen as an undercurrent, which one could feel in the interviews in Mewat. Often very strong sentiments were expressed by many opinion leaders to this author during the field interviews. The siege mentality could be the root cause of the female literacy being 2.5% in some parts of Mewat and the family size being upto 12 or even 15 children. Unwritten *Syariah*-like laws were found to prevail and they have some peculiar features affecting the family and the status of women. They prescribed domestication of women: "... remain in your houses." [*Ahzab* 33:33] and "...do not expel them from their house..." [*Talaq* 65:1]. Also there is a *hadith* that says: 'Women are prohibited to pray outside home'. (Ali, 2006, 2006)

The question whether faith (religion) ~~impacts—population~~ impacts population, family size, sex selection, age at marriage and status of women was asked to the respondents. Each time over 95% respondents replied which shows a high level of awareness about the issue. Their response is at table 3.1 which shows that faith does have a significant impact on population, family size, sex selection, age at marriage and status of women which cannot be ignored. The impact is felt more (by over two-thirds people) on population and status of women and about 50-50 on rest of the parameters.

Table 3.1 Impact of Faith on Various Parameter

Parameter	Yes N	Yes %	No	No%	Total N	Missing %
Population	282	67.6	134	32.1	416	3.0
Familysize	195	47.3	216	52.4	411	4.2
SexSelection	229	55.6	182	44.2	411	4.2
Age at Marriage	209	50.9	201	48.9	410	4.4
Status of Women	271	66.3	137	33.5	408	4.9

Only the major religions i.e. Hindus (including Sikhs) and Muslims were considered and the rest with smaller sample size were ignored. The Chi-square test shows that religion impacts actual family size significantly. The analysis shows in table 5.5 that while only 2% (one person) had a one or even two child family, only 5.5% belonged to families that had three child and just 3.6% a were from four child family amongst Muslims. While 27% belonged to families with 5 children, most (62%) belonged to families with more than 5. In contrast to this 24.6% Hindus belonged to families which had just one or two kids, 33.5 % belonged to families that had 3 kids another 24.6 % to families that had 4 kids. Just 10.6% had five and only 6.7% had more than 5 kids.

The impact of religion on the ideal family size was also examined. Chi-square test on this cross-tabulation shows that religion impacts ideal family size significantly and the χ^2 value came out to be 62.2 for a d.o.f of 2 and p value of 0.000. The analysis shows that while only 2.4% (one person) considered one child as ideal, 20% considered even two as

ideal amongst Muslims and most (78%) settled at 3 or more. In contrast, of the Hindus 7.1% desired just one child, 74% two kids and only 19% sought 3 or more kids.

It is interesting to note that when the general impression about family size is taken as the measure, then almost none of the youth desire to have more than two kids(except those from Mewat area, who desire four or more children).

2.5 Hypothesis Regarding Sex Ratio

The Hypothesis regarding Sex Ratio is “Higher the awareness of youth regarding the sex ratio and the consequences of declining sex ratio the more they would be willing to do some thing about it.” The null hypothesis can be stated as “the awareness of youth regarding the sex ratio and consequences of declining sex ratio makes no difference in attitude or willingness of youth to do something about shortage of girls / sex selection”. The analysis of these variables was carried out in detail by means of chi-square tests and analysis of variance (Anova) and the results have been analyzed. Inferences drawn from that analysis are detailed now.

2.5.1 Awareness about Sex Ratio

Even though 82% respondents say sex ratio is an issue, the awareness about ‘actual sex ratio’ is very poor (table 2.1). Less than 18% responded for the village level sex ratio (actual correctness was not investigated) while the best response was 25% for the district level and about 50% for the state and national level. However, the correct knowledge even for National SR (band 900 to 930) is 20.5% and for the state level (SR band 810 to 870) is 18.6% only. The ideal sex ratio drew no response from 75% youth for India level, 76% at State level and about 80% or more for the district, town and village levels. **Overall only 14-15% of the respondents had an idea of ideal sex ratio for any level.** It is interesting to note that when seen at the Hindu-Muslim categories level, the knowledge of Muslims is almost at par with Hindus regarding the actual sex ratio whereas for the ideal sex ratio the awareness of Muslims is 5-8% only compared to 20-28% for the Hindus. So while 91% Muslims think sex ratio is an issue, there knowledge of the ideal sex ratio needs to be worked upon.

Table 2.1 Knowledge of Sex Ratio at Various Levels

Level	Knowledge of Actual SR			Knowledge of Ideal SR		
	Responded N	No Idea N	%	Responded N	No Idea N	%
India	208	341	79.5	109	320	74.6
State	210	349	81.4	104	325	75.8
District	105	324	75.5	89	340	79.3
Town	75	354	82.5	80	349	81.4
Village	78	351	81.8	77	352	82.1
Is an Issue	381	48	11.2			

2.5.2 Practices regarding Preferred Sex of Child and Number of Children

The questionnaire asked the unmarried respondents as to how many children did they want to have. Table 2.2 shows that 86.1 % of the eligible respondents wanted surely to go for the first child while about 71% wanted to go for 2nd Child as well. The number of those who thus wanted only one child is seen as 15%, which is indeed a sizeable chunk and needs to be explored further. There seems to be no preferred desired sex of the first child .It could be a socially desired answer, but it could also be that at this age, there is a natural affinity for a girl and the bias against even a single girl child may not have set in the minds of the boys. The preferred sex for the second child is distinctly male (46 %) as against 31% preferring female child. The chance of either sex has also gone down from 38% for first child to only 22% for the second child. The third child is again preferred to be a male and either sex choice is weakening but still significant. The first order sex ratio is 1035 whereas the second order sex ratio falls to 679 and only 286 for the third child.

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Table 2.2 Preference for Sex of Children by Order of Birth

Birth Order	1st Child		2nd Child		3rd Child		4th Child	
	N	Percent	N	%	N	%	N.	%
SEX								
Girl	88	31.7	72	31.4	6	14.0	5	26.3
BOY	85	30.6	106	46.3	21	48.8	5	26.3
Either	105	37.8	51	22.3	16	37.2	9	47.4
Total	278	100	229	100	43	100	19	100
Missing	151	(86.1)	200	(70.9)	386	(13.3)	410	(5.9)
Married	106		106		106		106	
No child/ No reply	45	13.9	94	29.1	280	86.7	304	94.1
	429	100	429	100	429	100	429	100

2.5.3 Various facets of Sex ratio of Society

One of the various sets of information on sex composition relates to data on current sex ratio of respective families derived from information provided by the respondents. This has been computed and is tabulated (in table 2.3). It is interesting to note that the youths' perception of an ideal sex ratio hovers around 956, which is seemingly better. Similarly, a small family is defined by the youths gives a sex ratio of 933, which is lower than ideal but still good, though problem may be there in some sectors. Nevertheless, this is also a perception of the reality.

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The ground reality in relation to sex ratio is revealed from the total children of married brothers and sisters of the respondents. The first married brother/sister's children have been totalled and they give a sex ratio of 711 only. Since most of the youths have only one married sibling this category was taken up separately. The sex ratio of children of other remaining married siblings works out to be 778, which again is a cause of concern. In one's own family the sex ratio is worked out from the number of brothers and sisters reported by each individual respondent and this comes out to be 647 reflecting

serious concern. The youths were asked about the general perception of the number of children people have in the respondent's own community. The number of children, female, and male, suggested by the youths indicated a sex ratio of 829. The same exercise conducted separately for Hindus (including Sikhs) and Muslims gave a sex ratio of 867 for Hindus and only 744 for Muslims.

The youths were also asked in general as to what is the sex of the first child in the families in their 'recall vicinity'. The response was female 132 and male 96 (either 16) amongst Hindus as against 8 females and 32 males amongst Muslims leading to a first birth order sex ratio of 1375 amongst Hindus of the area as against 250 for Muslims.

Another analysis pertains to the sex composition of off-springs reported by currently married men, showing that the sex ratio of the first-born children is 1260 and that of the second born children falls to a drastic 318. The decline of sex ratio between the first and second order children is a shocking indicator of the extent to which man seems to be intervening with the forces of nature. Similarly, for the sex of the 'child planned next' there are 51 responses which are 29 female and 22 male (sex ratio is 1318). However, for the child planned after the immediate next, the sex ratio again drops to 480. This indicates that come what may people of all background want a male child, if not the first time then for sure the second time. And that is where reproductive technology, assisted by human greed, comes to their rescue.

Table 2.3 Group Specific Sex Ratio among Respondent's Family and Community

S No	Variable Available	Values	Mean/ Females	Mean/ Males	Sex Ratio
1	Preferred sex of 1 st child of unmarried (but will marry) male (UM) : (no of females/males)*1000	Either- 105	88	85	1035
2	Preferred sex of 2 nd child of unmarried male (UM)	51	72	106	679
3	Preferred sex of 3 rd child of UM	16	6	21	286
4	Ideal-small family total female ,male children suggested by all respondents (sum): (no of females/males)*1000		454	475	956
5	Def-small family total female ,male children suggested by all respondents (sum): (no of females/males)*1000		443	475	933
6	Female kids listed for first bro/sister / male kids		64	90	711
7	Female kids of other brothers and sisters/ their male kids		81	104	778
8	Females amongst own total family/ males amongst own total family:		388	600	647
9	General existing number of children (girls) in community/ boys in general (totals have been taken for all respondents)		549 87(H) 57(M)	662 46(H) 211(M)	829 867H 744M
10	Sex of existing 1 st kid of married persons:	N=52	29	23	1260
11	Sex of existing 2 nd kid of married	N=29	7	22	318

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12	Sex of 1 st kid planned next by married	N=60 Eith-9	29	22	1318
13	Sex of 2 nd kid planned next by married	N=41 Eith-4	12	25	480
14	Father's side total sisters (sum)/ total brothers (sum)*1000	899/ 1394	2.16	3.33	645

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The inter-generational impact on sex ratio can be assessed by an analysis of the sex composition of members (brothers and sisters, including parent) in the father's side of family. The sum of the members shows a total of 899 sisters and 1394 brothers on the father's side. The average number of children comes to 5.5 on father's side with 2.2 females and 3.3 males. Thus, the sex ratio comes to an alarming 645 and one wonders how the previous generation handled the sex ratio imbalances.

2.6 The Personal Experience.

Almost 60% of the youths who were asked as to whether they felt any shortage of girls in the society replied in the affirmative. Similarly, only 27% of those who regularly or sometimes discuss the sex ratio related problems feel that there is no shortage of females. Here the Chi-square test gives $\chi^2 = 54.46$ with d.o.f of 4 at $p=0.000$ which again rejects the null hypothesis. In fact 60% of total, 58% Hindus and surprisingly even amongst the Muslims 70% have the perception of shortage of females, which spreads evenly across all ages of youth without any clear-cut demarcation.

Almost half of the respondents replied (table 2.4), and of those who replied, 41% said that the scarcity was about 10%, another 35% saw the scarcity to be 20% and 24% saw it to exceed 20%. Shockingly almost half of the total respondents said that they were aware of the imports of women. The overall mean shortage of women is reported at 21.9%. By Hindus it is reported at 20.6% and by Muslims at 25.2%. So the scarcity of girls is for real.

Table 2.4 Shortage of Girls Perceived by Respondents

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Percentage Shortage	N	Percent
upto &10%	87	41.2
upto& 20%	73	34.6
>20%	51	24.2
Total	211	100
Missing	218	50.8
Total	429	100

2.6.1 Decision making by People who already have a preference for the first child

It is said that the sex of the child to be born is not in one's hand but analysis of data shows that the sex of the second child depends critically on the sex of the first child. It is clear that those with a girl as their first child are more inclined to seek a boy while those with a boy already are very likely to accept a girl. This gives immense scope to influence and curb the demand for "second male child", which was seen among the older generation in certain communities as in Mewat. Cross-tabulation of 'preferred sex of 2nd child of unmarried male (but will marry)' with 'sex of 1st kid in general' provided $\chi^2=8.05$ with d.o.f of 2 at $p=0.018$ which shows that knowledge of the prevailing sex influences the sex preference and the null hypothesis is rejected again.

Outcomes of the question "How many and of what sex child would you seek if you have the first child as a girl or a boy?" are presented in table 2.5. Analysis shows that those with a girl already, want an average of only 0.38 girls more and rather wish for 1.2 boys. On the other hand those with one boy, want/will accept 0.63 girls and want 0.35 boys more. This shows that by and large people have a tendency to accept a girl if they have a boy, and they seek a boy at any cost even if they have a girl. The Standard deviation is also of similar order for either sex. Here the question arises whether the people are indeed choosing the sex of the first child. The census-based evidence does suggest they are, as the natural trend would not yield the sex ratio the way it has. The point is that youth seems to be willing to change the basic thinking in this regard. Perhaps the challenge before social marketers is to give external support to the youth so that having a girl child becomes acceptable, and even the preferred choice.

Table 2.5 Sex Preference for the Sex of the Next Child Classified by Sex of the First Child

Want more	If First Girl		If First Boy	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Girl	0.38	0.575	0.63	0.484
Boy	1.2	0.401	0.35	0.593

~~Here the question arises whether the people are indeed choosing the sex of the first child. The census based evidence does suggest they are, as the natural trend would not yield the sex ratio the way it has. The point is that youth seems to be willing to~~

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change the basic thinking in this regard. Perhaps the challenge before social marketers is to give external support to the youth so that having a girl child becomes acceptable, and even the preferred choice.

2.6.2 The Impact of the ‘Odd Male (?) out’ Factor

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Cross-tabulation of the ideal size of small family with its sex composition among the respondents is gives and interesting outcome and shows that the ideal in the minds of the male youth is indeed a boy and a girl. Why the youth is unable to convert this thought into action is to be seen. However it is a cause of concern that 22 out of the 23 who indicated three children as the ideal size wanted two boys and one girl. So the question is what will be the sex of the third child if allowed?

It is therefore interesting to measure the average number of desired girls or boys for those who seek to have just one child or three children. Who would be the odd one left out? There are just six respondents wanting a single child family so the question regarding what would be the preferred sex in ‘one child families’ can’t be explored here. In this context, the table 2.6 gives the sex ratio of the families wanting two or three kids. The analysis shows that 96.3% of Hindus define small family as one with two children and having equal number of boys and girls, and possibly are content with that. Only 4.7% of families define small family as one with three kids and they also possibly reach birth order three only in search of male and hence may land up with a sex ratio, which may favour girls rather than boys.

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With two children, Muslims want 1.08 girls and 1.15 boys on an average and with three kids want only 1.33 girls and 2.05 boys, which shows a distinct sort of male bent. It is also interesting to note that the standard deviation of the third child is almost 3 times that of the second child. It shows that while people are sure about two kids, the question of third is open to review.

A crude sex ratio can also be worked out between the number of male and female kids wanted by the youths in the context of chosen family size. The sex ratio of two child ‘small family’ aimed at by the youths turns out to be 990 for Hindus and 939 for Muslims whereas the ideal sex ratio for both is stated as 1000 i.e. 2 kids means one boy and one girl and that is it. However, for the 3-child family whereas the Hindus give a sex ratio of 1114, the Muslims turn up with a sex ratio of almost 649.

Table 2.6 Mean Number of Girls and Boys in what Youth Defined as Small Family and Ideal Small Family in Hindus and Muslims

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Aspect	Number of kids	HINDUS				Anova Sig.	MUSLIMS				Anova Sig.
		N	Mean	SD			N	Mean	SD		
Girls in Defined Small Family	2	337	1.01	0.12	0	2	13	1.08	0.28	0.2	
	3 or More	13	1.46	0.52		3 or More	42	1.33	0.75		
	Total	350	1.03	0.18		Total	55	1.27	0.68		

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Boys in Defined Small Family	2	337	1.02	0.15	0	2	13	1.15	0.38	0
	3 or More	13	1.31	0.48		3 or More	42	2.05	1.34	
	Total	350	1.03	0.18		Total	55	1.84	1.24	
Total Size of Defined Small Family	2	337	2.03	0.21	0	2	13	2.23	0.6	0
	3 or More	13	2.92	0.95		3 or More	42	3.38	1.36	
	Total	350	2.06	0.32		Total	55	3.11	1.31	
Girls in Ideal Small Family	2	338	1	0.08	0	2	13	1	0	0
	3 or More	13	1.77	0.44		3 or More	42	1.69	0.9	
	Total	351	1.03	0.18		Total	55	1.53	0.84	
Boys in Ideal Small Family	2	338	1	0.08	0	2	13	1	0	0
	3 or More	13	1.69	0.63		3 or More	42	2.17	1.34	
	Total	351	1.03	0.19		Total	55	1.89	1.27	
Total in Ideal Small Family	2	338	2	0	0	2	13	2	0	0
	3 or More	13	3.62	0.51		3 or More	42	3.86	1.35	
	Total	351	2.06	0.32		Total	55	3.42	1.42	

2.6.3 Desired Sex of first child vs. Knowledge of Sex Ratio

Numerous chi-square tests on variables related to awareness of sex ratio and their sex preference for offspring were carried out. The chi-square test on cross-tabulation of 'desired sex of first child' with the correct national sex ratio (band 900 to 930) yields $\chi^2 = 4.17$ with d.o.f of 4 at $p=0.388$ which shows that lack of awareness of the sex ratio amongst youth makes them vulnerable to sex selection. Similarly Chi-square test with ideal sex ratio of India yields $\chi^2 = 4.1$ with d.o.f of 2 at $p=0.128$ and test with ideal sex ratio of state yields $\chi^2 = 5.17$ with d.o.f of 2 at $p=0.075$ which clearly shows that the null hypothesis is rejected. Similarly when the chi-square test is conducted for the sex preference of the second child with the knowledge of right national sex ratio it yields a $\chi^2 = 3.24$ with d.o.f of 4 at $p=0.52$; with ideal sex ratio of India the test gives $\chi^2 = 1.95$ with d.o.f of 2 at $p=0.388$; with ideal sex ratio of state the test results in $\chi^2 = 2.93$ with d.o.f of 2 at $p=0.231$ and closer home with the ideal sex ratio of district it gives $\chi^2 = 0.773$ with d.o.f of 2 at $p=0.68$ all of which clearly supports the alternate hypothesis.

The results shows clearly that generally speaking, those preferring the sex selection (of male child) either had 'no knowledge or wrong knowledge' of the sex ratio of their area or are not aware of the consequences of preferring the male child only. The paired T-test establishes the sex preference for male child strongly for those with a girl already wanting double the number of boys rather than girl. The Regression tests show that the sex selection has nothing to do with the perceived shortage of girls and the individuals are on to maximizing whatever they perceive as their gain and not the collective good.

2.7 Need for a Public Debate

The analysis of 'degree of scarcity' cross tabulated with regularity of discussion on shortage of girls shows that only 15% of those who have 'regularly' discussed the sex ratio issue still feel it is not a critical issue (amongst all those who believe that sex ratio is not a critical issue). The chi-square test on gives $\chi^2= 9.25$ with d.o.f of 4 at $p=0.05$. There is an obvious need for a public debate on the sex ratio issue.

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2.7.1 Cashing on the Concern for Self Preservation/Progeny

Analysis on the cross-tabulation of the response of youth to the question "will adverse sex ratio affect you?" and "affect your children?" with regularity of discussion on shortage of girls shows that about 70% of those who regularly or at least sometimes discuss the sex ratio issue feel it is a critical issue that will affect them and their future generation. Only 14% of those who 'regularly' (65% including the 'sometimes' category) discuss the issue feel that it is 'hardly' an issue for their generation.

However, the concern for the next generation is more and only 25.5% of those who 'regularly or sometimes' discuss the issue of sex ratio feel that it is 'hardly' an issue of concern. The Chi-square test gives for 'adverse sex ratio affect you' with 'regularity of discussion' (b123Cat X b129) gives $\chi^2= 16.44$ with d.o.f of 4 at $p=0.002$ and the same with 'adverse sex ratio affect your children' gives $\chi^2= 47.7$ with d.o.f of 4 at $p=0.000$. Both of these tests then reject the null hypothesis.

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2.8 Causes and Consequences of Early Marriage

One of the consequences of low sex ratio has been noticed to be early marriage. The respondents were asked as to what did they perceive to be the causes of early marriage in the society and their replies were codified and entered. The responses varied, with 26.6 % saying its' due to illiteracy; 31.5% saying that its' more on account of the social customs; 13.6 % saying that parents felt that girls were a liability; 19.4 % ascribing it to poverty; 5% saying that it was being done to ensure safety of the girl and others were 3.8%. The items need to be attacked individually and strategically if the age at marriage of girls is to be pushed up.

Interviews showed that invariably the system/custom in rural areas (and even urban areas, as urban settlers prefer marriage in rural linkups) is to marry off the younger sister at the time of marrying the elder sibling. Also popular is the exchange of 'our girl for your girl' i.e. the brother-sister are married to the other families' sister-brother. In one case in Loharu it was found that a lady gave away her young 14 year old daughter in marriage in order to get a bride for her brother-in-law who was not getting a girl. This is socially sanctioned exchange system that does not account for the individual aspirations and rather the 'person (usually a child)' becomes a commodity of exchange in a melodramatic manner (the child is forced to sacrifice its life plan for a sibling). The trend of marrying younger siblings together with older one and the 'exchange system' are aimed at reducing the high cost associated with marriage and increasing the chances of getting a bride (fall out of adverse sex ratio) and strengthening inter-clan ties. [This has also been established by the Drishti study 2010.](#)

The main role of deciding whom to marry and when seems to be of the father (83.7% for boys and 76.5 % for girls) as compared to mother (56.2% for boys and 56.9 % for girls). The role of youth themselves is 24.2% for the boys and an understandably lower 19.1% assigned for the girls (remember that the respondents are boys).

2.9 Dowry Practice: Beliefs and Barriers

Only about 17.6% respondents said that they believed in the transaction of dowry and 82.4% did not believe in it. This could be a socially desirable answer. But it is also true that the youth themselves do not have a significant say in their marriage. However, during the personal interviews it transpired that people were not averse to whatever the girl's side gives on their own and would not demand any dowry. Analysis shows that it can be said that while youths say that they do not believe in dowry, they do feel that it is a barrier in getting a good match. Thus, dowry is a lurking enemy in the minds of youth and this can be used to turn youth against it by means of social marketing. During field interviews, it transpired that the demand for dowry was less common or even non-existent in case the girl was employed. Therefore, the women can be motivated that they will never be a burden on anyone if they get adequate vocational education. The returns from investment in education may come late, but are substantially higher than the earnings of the illiterate or semi-literate.

With the amendment of Hindu Succession Act, now daughters are equal partners in the father's property and this has strengthened the status of women powerfully. Daughters anyway normally do not insist on their share but now their consent to give up their share is very vital and would force brothers to behave properly and respect the sisters unless they want to lose the share. This may also give a potential tool to daughters to use the parental property to ensure that the sons do not misbehave with the parents. On the other hand it is also a fact that in NCR region where property is costly girls are being avoided to keep property within the family wraps.

The Maulavis told during interviews that in Islam there already is a provision of one third of the total property being distributed amongst all the daughters of the deceased and two thirds amongst the sons. Though it seems that this does give equality a bye but is still powerful enough to make a difference. It was also interesting to note that in the Mewat area the girls get only a one-fifth share as the Meo Customary Law prevails which is more biased against the women.

Apart from dowry being a handicap, analysis shows that expenditure on marriage of girls is expected uniformly to be at least half a notch above that on boys' marriage. The inability to pay adequate dowry was seen as a significant barrier by almost 60% respondents in finding a good match whereas 24.5% felt it was not so and 15.5% could not commit on this question (can't say). It is interesting to note that in some of the personal interviews it emerged that a basic difference that has come in the psyche of people on account of reduced sex ratio is that earlier people used to ask '*koi ladka batao*' ('can you suggest a boy..') whereas now they say '*koi ladki batao*' ('can you suggest a girl..'). However, people still feel that the situation has not impacted the dowry market or entered yet in the public mind. At the same time, may be the exposure of 57% people to personal knowledge of dowry related violence on women shows that the fear is still there

significantly in this regard and needs a campaign to be altered fully. Analysis shows that about 47% people claim to have actual knowledge of at least 9 to 10 cases of dowry related violence in their area /community, which is shocking indeed, even if it is a perception.

2.10 Decision-makers Regarding Having Kids

To understand dynamics of real sex ratio it is important to realize as to who decides whether to have kids or not. The analysis of data on this reveals that even taking into account the multiple responses, the roles of father and mother are minimal, that ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~of~~ the grand parents are insignificant and of the village/caste elders etc and others are non-existent. Though having a child is still is a male dominated decision (in 27% of cases by male vs. in 18% of cases by female) yet the role of both partners is prime as it ought to be at 57%. In urban areas decision-making is much more by mutual consensus than in the rural areas (63% 'both' in urban vs. 55% in rural) though the male-female gap is almost the same. Attempt was made to see the difference between Hindus and Muslims and it was found that role of both husband and wife is most important, more so among Hindus than among Muslims (59% vs. 43% respectively). While male dominates female among Muslims (31% vs. 3.4%), the reverse is the case among Hindus (2.5% vs. 20%). No significant role of parents was documented, though the father had a 7% say among Muslims compared with 3% among Hindus. There is thus a strong case of empowering the women, especially Muslim to enhance their role beyond just producing babies and to insist on a family composition and size that they can handle, and give a quality of life better than themselves to their children.

2.11 Spacing and the Sex of the Child

Is spacing influenced by sex of the child born and the order in which they are born? Study shows that the first-born's sex has had a distinct influence on the total males in the family and the gaps between first and second, second and third, which were somewhat lesser in duration than the gap between third and fourth siblings and a weak influence on the gap between fifth and fourth sibling. The number of males comes down from 2.71 to 2.12 if the first child is a girl; else, the sons only are preferred. Similarly, a girl at first order reduces the gap between the next children to 2.29 years instead of 3.11 years if the child is a male. So the male child gets better cushioning of spacing by almost 30% extra compared to a female child. The first-born's sex has an unexplained influence on the gap between 2nd-3rd and then on to subsequent children.

The sex of the second born sibling influences the total number of females in the family, total family size, and the duration of gap between third and fourth siblings. It increases the number of girls to 2.33 compared to 1.77 if a male was born. It also naturally raises the size of family to 4.72 compared to if the second child is a male. Similarly, the sex of third child influences the total number of males in the family, total family size and first birth interval and the gap between third and fourth siblings and the next sibling. The fourth child's sex influences the total number of males in the family, total family size and gap between third and fourth siblings. The fifth child's sex again affects the total number of males in the family and is related to the mother and father's age.

The developed and the backward districts differ in terms of total family size (including number of males and females), the age of the parents, and the age at marriage of the mother. Among different socio-economic factors, the caste seems to have some influence only on the total number of females in the family and some on the child spacing in larger families. The total family income has some influence on the number of males, the age at marriage of the mother, and on the birth spacing in the larger families. The religion, however has a dominating influence on total family size including number of males and females and the age at marriage of the mother, and mildly relates to age of the parents, especially to the father. Occupation of parents significantly influences the number of females in the family and mildly affects the total family size as well as the parental age. Education has a strong influence on the number of males and mild effect on the number of females and total family size. It marginally influences the gap between the initial siblings and has some influence on the spacing of siblings in a larger family.

2.12 The Fate of the Unmarried Men

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2.12.1 The Awareness on Scarcity of Women for Marriage

When 199 out of 404 respondents in the study area say that they were aware of women being imported to their locality, and each person reported on an average 10 such cases, it is time to take notice of the situation. With almost 80% respondents agreeing that scarcity of females is a critical and 87% males feeling that 'it is an issue' the fate of the unmarried men needs urgent attention. The causes of scarcity, as reported by respondents range from female foeticide/abortions (43%), lack of education (45.5%), son preference (7%), cheap mentality (1.5%), poverty (1%), and dowry etc (1%).

Table 2.7 Perceived Impact of Shortage of Girls on Self and Children

How Shortage of Girls will affect Respondent			How SR will affect Kids	
Anticipated Impact	N	Percent	N	Percent
No girl for marriage	95	66.4	83	60.6
Rape etc. Crime Against Women will increase	34	23.8	43	31.4
May have to pay Dowry to girl	5	3.5	2	1.5
Lack of Choice, Poor Quality, Character	7	4.9	5	3.6
Others	2	1.4	4	2.9
Total	143	100	137	100.0
Missing	286	66.6	292	68.0
Total	429		429	

The response to the question (table 2.7) as to "will scarcity of women affect you?" the answer was "yes, critically" by 62% of respondents, "moderately" by 11% and "not at all" by 24%. Again, 65.5% of the respondents said it will very much affect their children and 34.5% said it would hardly affect them. Those who did say that it will affect them, felt that the biggest problem (66%) will be: 'availability' of girl for marriage, 24% said crime against women will increase, 3.5% felt they may have to pay a bride price to get a girl, 5% said they will not get the girl of right choice or standard and 1% mentioned other ill effects. Therefore, in the context of sex ratio imbalance it can be seen that the main

concern remains the institution of marriage. The impact on the children is also anticipated more in terms of violence, crime and the lesser girls to wed.

The possible options for a young male when he does not get a girl as partner are many. The respondents were asked to list their choices in this regard which have been tabulated in table 2.8. The table shows that while almost 51.6% of respondents were reconciled to remaining unmarried, many sought other avenues. For example, answers reveal that some 12.1% will marry a widow, 10.3% will purchase a bride, 10% will visit a sex worker, 10% thought of other options and 6% even accepted the notion of becoming a *sadhu* (priest) or a *fakeer* in case marriage is not possible due to deficit of brides. In retrospect homosexuality option should also have been canvassed.

Table 2.8 Respondents (Male) Classified by Options in case a Bride is not available

Choice-if not get Girl?	N	Percent
Marry a widow	34	12.1
Become a Sadhu/Fakeer	17	6.0
Purchase a Bride	29	10.3
Visit Sex Worker	27	9.6
Remain Unmarried	145	51.6
Others	29	10.3
Total	281	100.0
Missing	146	34.5
Total	429	

Various parameters pertaining to scarcity of girls and unmarried persons have been cross tabulated. The cross-tabulation of the question as to “whether sex ratio will affect your child” with the knowledge of unmarried persons showed that those who had no knowledge of unmarried person(s) were also the ones who believed that adverse sex ratio will hardly affect their lives. Also 66% of those who had discussed the issue only once believed that declining sex ratio would hardly affect their life and 84% of those respondents who had discussed the sex ratio issue believed that it would affect their life. Eighty percent of those who knew unmarried persons said that sex ratio will affect their children’s lives, though less so for their own selves. Conversely, 78% who did not know any unmarried persons felt that the scarcity would not affect their lives.

It is important to observe that 87% of those who felt that the scarcity of females in the society was critical were willing to wait for four or more years to get a bride. Anova showed that the problem would hit Hindus and Muslims, the SCs, the OBCs the general castes equally. Therefore, ‘this is not my problem’ syndrome will not work anymore.

Cross tabulation of the question “will sex ratio affect you?” with the ‘status of unmarried males’ showed that 92% of those who felt that society outcasts the unmarried, and 61% of those who felt that it find faults with the spinsters were very much concerned with the falling sex ratio. Similarly, concerns came from 71% of youths who felt that unmarried men currently have a bad time and 57% of those who felt that they have a so-so time. Seventy-six percent of the men who ‘felt the shortage of women’ were concerned that sex ratio will affect them ‘personally’.

[A study by Drishti of 10190 households in Haryana located 318 with a bride who had been purchased states : It is seen that those \(men\) who are vulnerable in some sense](#)

are not married meaning these men do not get a wife as easily. In most cases underlying cause is poverty and unemployment. It is difficult to get a girl for a man if he is poor or illiterate in Haryana (Drishti, 2010). Same applies to the physically disabled and poor.

The society seems willing to take cognizance of the female deficit and cooperate given the 'right' kind of information. Eighty-four percent of the respondents were willing to consider (19% maybe and 65% ready) becoming volunteers/ or desired rendering social service for dealing with the falling sex ratio. Of those who felt that sex ratio decline would affect their lives 74% were in the 'yes' mode and only 10% in the 'maybe' mode. What is needed now is the right platform, which the Government, the NGOs and the corporate sector can provide. If this raw energy and attitude is not channelized in appropriate direction, it will wither away.

2.12.2 The Awareness about the Unmarried Persons

The knowledge about the unmarried persons was ascertained by asking the respondents about the number of persons known personally to them who were forced to remain bachelors until very late. In all 90 respondents knew such unmarried individuals/forced bachelors and persons who married late in life and on an average each respondent had the knowledge of 6.8 such persons, which is a high number. Descriptive analysis reveals that 38.9% of respondents knew at least 1 or 2 odd unmarried males each whereas 36.7% knew 3-5 cases and rest 24.4% knew many (i.e. >5) cases each. This knowledge about unmarried males was cross-tabulated for rural/urban areas separately and it was found that, in the urban areas the awareness about incidence of forced bachelors is lesser. While in urban locations 47% respondents knew 1-2 cases, 53% knew 3-5 cases, and none knew about more than five cases, in the rural areas the distribution was more even.

On an average, the urbanites knew 2.9 cases per knowledgeable person as against ruralites knew 7.9 such persons with $p=0.067$. Similarly comparing means revealed that while unmarried persons knew five cases each, the married knew 12.3 cases with Anova significant at 0.005. There is no significant difference in Hindus and Muslims about the number of cases known. This does not mean that instances of forced bachelors/late marrying persons will be same in all the religions and needs further study. Significant differences were not found across income categories or educational categories regarding the number of unmarried persons known. So as yet it can be segmented into a rural or urban problem categories only. Obviously the married are more aware of the problem having gone through the grind once. Finally it is also interesting that comparing means of developed and backward districts shows that while in the developed districts the youth knew 3.56 cases, in the backward areas this number is much larger at 8.85 and the significance level is also quite high at $p=0.02$. Therefore, sooner or later every individual in the society has to pay a price for remaining backward.

It is likely that the rural persons are better informed than their urban counterparts about the unmarried persons, as the rural informal networks are stronger. It is also likely that the unmarried men find it better to stay in rural settings. During discussions, it was revealed that in the past it was customary to marry only one brother in the family and allow all the brothers access to his wife for conjugal purposes. In fact, this is still a

popular and socially accepted custom in one of the topmost castes of the state of Haryana where one wife is shared by all the brothers and refusal to cohabit invites wrath of the family. Since such practice has the sanction of the vocal landed caste, it is accepted and imitated by other castes as well. Interviews in the field revealed that many fathers are reluctant to give away their daughters to large rural households, as they fear that the girl may be forced to share bed with all the males.

2.12.3 The Fate of Unmarried Persons

It is natural to ask the respondents about the fate of the ‘forced bachelors’ or those marrying late who are known to the respondents. Descriptive analysis of this multiple response question in this connection reveals (table 2.9) that 12% of the persons who did not marry by usual age married very late, 16% accepted polyandry, 27.5% married a widow or a divorcee, 20% got a migrant to marry after payment, and 25% did not marry at all. Therefore, this way the fate of the unmarried males known to the respondents seems to have got settled by and large. However, the question remains as to how the society is preparing itself for the acute shortage of females particularly in the north.

Table 2.9 Fate of the Unmarried Males?

Status	N	%
Married late	14	11.7
Polyandry	19	15.8
Married a Widow/ Divorcee	33	27.5
Got an Immigrant to marry	24	20
Did not marry at all	30	25
Total	120	100
Missing	309	72.02
Total	429	

It was also ascertained as to what the youth saw as the fate of the unmarried men (after 35 years) usually in the society. An overwhelming share (96.5%) of the respondents answered this question, which indicates that though initially very few had come out, almost all have some knowledge of the fate of such men and are concerned to avoid such a consequence for themselves. The response of 15% of youths was that people praised such unmarried persons; another 45% felt the society was neutral and 36% felt that society found faults with such men and a small 3% said that they were even treated as outcaste from the society.

The Drishti study shows that in 47% of cases who had purchased a bride, somebody in the family had already been married like this. Similarly such marriage among friends and neighbours had been reported by 60% men. These figures tell us how common these practices are becoming in Haryana(Drishti,2010).

2.13 The Crime Angle

Though not investigated in detail, during interviews it came out that these unmarried males are increasingly involved in the crimes. The smuggling of liquor during prohibition was done mostly by these youth, they also indulge in kidnapping, extortion, and property related crimes. Finally, they frequently commit crime against women. An effort was made to relate the crime against women (per thousand) in various districts of

Haryana to total sex ratio. It shows that districts with higher sex ratio are lesser prone to crime against women. This relationship needs to be examined longitudinally at micro level. In addition, the general crimes against women are going up and these aspects need further probe in a systematic manner. In the long run, shortage of females in the society can be disastrous and can lead to perpetuation of crime against women, general rise in crimes and worsening of law & order, cross-cultural migration, which may cause racial tensions in the long run?

2.14 Engaging the Males: The Offer to Serve

On the face of it, table 2.10 shows that at the end of the survey over 90 % of the respondents want to serve the cause of society by helping increase age at marriage (90.3%), Sex Ratio (91.2%), Birth Spacing (91.8%) and sex education (93%). A good 80% proposed to help the unmarried lead a respectable life and 69% of the respondents who responded (and 55.9% overall) agreed that in view of the adverse sex ratio they may consider remaining unmarried and serving the society. Moreover many were willing to take up more than one area of activity and the missing entries are generally below 13% which shows that the youth are serious about contributing to a cause which can make a big difference in their own life.

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Table 2.10 Area of Voluntary Service/Help proposed by Respondents Willing to serve Society

Increase Age at Marriage		Increase Sex Ratio		Increase Birth Spacing		Increase Sex Edu		Help the UM		Will remain UM & serve Society	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
335	90.3	351	91.2	346	91.8	351	93.6	282	80.1	239	68.7
36	9.7	34	8.8	31	8.2	24	6.4	70	19.9	109	31.3
371	100	385	100	377	100	375	100	352	100	348	100
58	13.5	44	10.3	52	12.1	54	12.6	77	18.0	81	18.9
429		429		429		429		429		429	

3.0 IMPLICATIONS

[For a quick review the key findings are tabulated at Annexure I and the implications of the same are discussed here.](#)

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3.1 The Awareness Issue:

The analysis shows that awareness of actual local vital figures, amongst even college going youth is a dismal 10-20 %. Overall, only about 5% of respondents had idea of state's population or the 'carrying capacity'. Even if the youth wish to do something, they can do only if they are aware about the problem and its possible remedies. The interviews showed that the total parental dominance on the vital issues of area and institution of study, work and marriage (86%) etc renders the youth obedient may be, but quite un-enterprising and lacking in self-esteem.

Analysis also shows that the current educational system and qualifications it offers to males is not yet the deciding factor in determining the ideal family composition. Therefore, our education is failing in this respect. In such a scenario it appears difficult that the youth would relate to the problem so close to them. Perhaps the problem again is with our schooling, which does not perhaps encourage them to explore about their neighbourhood. The trait of following the beaten path is willy-nilly passed on to the next generation.

The sex ratio in the society is not a planned thing. It is the collective outcome of what every family does. It is like the famous dilemma faced by a group of people who each was to pour a glass of milk in the tank in the dark of night thought that it will not make a difference if I don't put milk not realizing that everyone else was also upto the same game. In the end all that was found was water in the tank.

3.1.1 Awareness about Sex Ratio

That the youth are now concerned about the shortage of girls is definitely some achievement of the hype created around 'the missing girls'. Yet perhaps all families assume that the problem will not affect them since the awareness of quantum of problem is not there. It is also going to be, like ancient times, the survival of the fittest. In depth interviews with people who had purchased women for marriage revealed that they had no choice, as they were simply not able to get a match within their caste (Gujjars). They said the going rate can be from Rs. 50,000 to upto Rs. 3 -5 lakhs to get a girl amongst their community. They also revealed that only those physically and financially fit in the society are getting a girl. Life is getting very difficult for those not physically fit. A large number of Muslims also had got wives from outside (often Bengali speaking, possibly Bangladeshi) though the amount spent was stated as just the travel and marriage expenses apart from Mehr amount. Therefore, the problem of shortage of girls, is real and cannot be brushed aside though the proportion varies by caste, place etc.

The awareness about sex ratio is very poor and this could be due to illiteracy, visible disconnect of education contents to reality, inability of the socio-cultural milieu to identify the problem in time (it has been the scene in progressive estates of Haryana Punjab since decades) and not making them think about their own environment and their responsibility thereof. The awareness in general about ideal and even actual sex ratio is low. Amongst Muslims the awareness is even lower than general possibly due to lack of open debate and research on the topic and a wrong impression of 'no problem' in the society at large though the problem is undeniably present. The situation has got aggravated by the slow pace of change of mindsets (in terms of son preference) as compared to the cheap and easily accessible technology, and the consumerism promoted by economic reforms applying peer pressure to go for the winning combinations, reducing fear of God, squeezing out of the girl child and 'its not my problem syndrome'. The rising price of real estate in Haryana is also a reason to prefer sons to save assets within the family.

Interviews showed that society is not sensitised adequately that the collective outcome of sex preference can be disastrous and most feel that they will be able to afford to get a girl as daughter-in-law. Caste barriers are also breaking, at least in terms of accepting a lower caste girl easily. Extending this logic further it appears that ultimately

those at the receiving end will be the poorest of the poor. Moreover, if marriage and settling down do not remain an option then it is possible that these unmarried youth take to crime and crime rates may go up on this account.

One factor that emerged during discussions was that due to excessive submissiveness to extraneous factors, the youth simply laughed off the idea of being able to plan their life in any meaningful manner. There is a visible lack of any system of planning or vision about life amongst the youth. It is important to educate the prospective parents that birth itself can, and better be planned. Almost every respondent in Mewat area expressed the thought that childbirth was ordained by God as if he had no role or responsibility in it. Things that can keep the unmarried youth busy are needed, be it vocational education, cultural programmes, sports, adventure activities or enterprise.

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3.2 The Cost of the Girl Child

Analysis of census data as also our study show that sex ratio is impacted largely, apart from female literacy by the status of women. The 'cost to parents' of a girl child, includes, apart from cost of ~~education~~ education, feeding etc, the huge cost of marriage which is far higher than boys for no fault of the parents. Again, the customs force them to keep giving to the girls without expecting any old age support, which can surely be a cause of insecurity to the prospective parents. The youth say they themselves decide about the issue of having a child then what kind of cost-benefit analysis goes on in the minds of youth that ticks off the girls and yields dismal sex ratios. In question after question it came out that the decision making power of girls is lower than boys. Coupled with this the repeated attempts to have a boy even at the cost of having an army of girls. The squeezing out of the girl child is a reality. How should it be prevented or reversed? How to raise the status of women?

3.3 Improving the Awareness

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It is not surprising then that the first child was almost universally described by the youth as an accident because very little proper sex education had been imparted to them. Analysis of the data shows that in the backward areas 84%, and in the forward areas 97% of the respondents were not satisfied by the existing system of **sex education**. Only 27% overall and only 24% of the married admitted to having some formal or informal sex education. Over 90 % wanted to change the system of sex education. Therefore, the writing is there on the wall and as a nation India has been pushing sex education under the carpet while the AIDS epidemic looms large. Sex education can and will help demystify the sex and the propensity to marry and reproduce early would reduce once that happens. Interviews revealed that with at least a majority of youth indulging in premarital sex including MSM (male having sex with male) and youth believing that MSM does not result in AIDS the stakes in sex education are too high to be ignored.

3.4 The Problems of the Aged

One of the prime reasons of going in for having the institution of family is 'secure old age'. With the rising life expectancy, there are going to be large numbers of aged persons, couples or singles especially for women given that they are married younger.

The son preference is largely based on this hope of old age care and the social taboo on accepting care or hospitality from daughters once they are married off and on sons performing their last rights. If financial, health care and companionship issues are taken care of then almost 80% of problems of the aged will be solved. Joint family has been the traditional answer, but has shrunk to 72% and is not so much feasible in case of small family size, especially in urban context.

3.5 Sex Ratio-Accepting the Girl

The DLHS-2 has very interesting data on the sex preference of the next child to be a boy or a girl from the husband's point of view. The wife's view also does not seem to be materially different so it appears that the socio-economic-cultural factors are able to influence the mothers significantly to be partners in the decision of sex preference. Over all 35.6% husbands want a boy and only 7.7% want a girl. (Balance is 'either'). The percentage of those wanting boy is significantly higher in rural areas at 38.6% as compared to 27% in urban areas (no difference in preference for girls). Further with education the son preference is stated to decline. Son preference (daughter) is 39.5% (7.1%) for non-literates, 37.2% (7.5%) for 0-9 years educated males and 29.7 (8.4%) for those with 10 yrs or more education. It is recorded as 37.6 % (7.5%) for Hindus and 24.9% (7.1%) for Muslims. Again it seems to be 37% (7-8%) for SCs and OBCs, about 42.5% (10.2%) for STs and 29% (6.5%) for others. Son preference also is reported to be more in low standard of living index families at 41.4% (7.8%), lesser in medium 32.7% (7.7%) and least in high at 24.3% (7.1%). This shows that son preference prevails in people of all hues and colours and it would need a change in socio-cultural mindset to be effective in changing the son preference.

The findings show that sex ratio seems to be the worst for those with nil or small share in landholdings and is better for those with larger shareholdings. It is felt that it could be worthwhile to work on the 'Either category' (which is a significant 40%) i.e. who have left it to God maybe and make acceptance of girl child in them a matter of choice. It is interesting to note that the attitude of youth is very liberal as far as the sex of the first child is concerned, however, the sex ratio of the subsequent birth orders falls drastically to 679 for the second child and only 286 for the third child. This shows that even amongst the youth, the sex selection in favour of male child is at work mentally and this needs to be countered. It also shows complete failure of our education and values system in promoting equality for women. Findings show that even asking 'soul searching questions' regarding what should be the fate of girl child etc can make a difference in the attitude. The key during interviews and based on literature emerges to be the status of women and son preference, which are the key determinants of sex ratio.

People are quite concerned about their children, and when 65.5% say that lack of girls will very much affect their children, or, when 66% of those who did say that adverse sex ratio would affect them felt that the biggest problem would be lack of girl for marriage, it is time to take note of this crisis. Analysis shows that those who had no knowledge of unmarried persons were also the ones who believed that adverse sex ratio would hardly affect their lives. So the debate could be centred on figures of boys who did not get a girl to marry, with data culled out of matrimonial advertisements and surveys. It was pointed out at the population conference recently that the advertisements for 'brides

wanted' far outnumber those for 'grooms wanted' which again shows that the sex ratio is adverse.

With 97% youth wanting for sure to marry, it is again a great window of opportunity, which should not be lost and youth encouraged to join a campaign against sex selection. There is scope of engaging the youth in dialogue about issues that will directly affect their lives. They may not be able to make a difference immediately, but in the long run any change in heart is welcome.

3.6 Sex Preference for those with one Child

The attitude of those with an off spring is largely dependant on the sex of the existing offspring and they have to be treated in a manner different from those without an offspring. DLHS-2 features that those with no living son prefer 42.9% boy (1.9% girl) and those with one son prefer 27.7% (13.3%). On the other hand amongst those with no daughter, son preference is 20.9% (12%), with one daughter it is 47.4% (2.6%). This again gives the context and the magnitude of the problem at hand. The state governments providing any legal, social, and financial incentives in favour of the girl child should plan them for those who already have a child, more so a girl child and quantum should be maximum for those who will stop at one girl. This necessitates that those with one child should be counselled very differently than those who are likely to have their first child. With the institutional deliveries going up, that could be a good occasion to influence the potential mothers about spacing and the sex of the next child, if at all.

Analysis shows that while the first child is 'girl' for 56% cases but the second child is 'boy' for 78% cases. The first birth order sex ratio of 1375 amongst Hindu respondents as against 250 for Muslims, which is contrary to the public perception and could be due to a small sample but should not be ignored. The whispers and discussions one heard in the streets of Mewat about the girls being imported for marriage of boys in the area corroborate this ground reality of female deficit. Therefore corrective action is needed in Mewat on gender sensitization very urgently.

3.7 Engaging those wanting to go for three or more children

Almost every-one of the parents interviewed amongst Muslims stated that their desire was to have at least 3 kids in every 'small family'. Further, they also want at least two to be boys (out of the three). Continued for a long run, this will lead to an adverse sex ratio amongst Muslims as well. It is also interesting to note that the standard deviation of the third child is almost 3 times that of the second child. It shows that while people are sure about two kids, the question of third is open to review in public mind. Given that there is no issue as far as the sex ratio of two child 'small family' aimed at by the youths is concerned (turns out to be 990 for Hindus and 939 for Muslims), **the third child shall hold the key to future sex ratios**. DLHS-2 also shows that those with two sons prefer a boy 15% (and girl 26.8%). Amongst those with two daughters it is 62.9% for boy and negligible for girl.

3.8 Tackling the Dowry issue:

The expenditure on marriage of girls and dowry are still significant barriers from the past and need to be tackled in a big way by means of social marketing. During field interviews, however, it became clear that the demand for dowry was less common or

even non-existent in case the girl was employed. Belief in dowry seems to have waned down either due to legal pressures, knowledge of impending scarcity of women or due to idealism that is there in the youth. However, during the personal interviews it transpired that people were not averse to whatever the girl's side gives on their own and would not demand any dowry. Therefore, the women can be motivated that they will never be a burden on anyone if they get adequate vocational education. The returns from investment in education may come late, but are substantially higher than the earnings of the illiterate or semi-literate.

Analysis shows that all of the male respondents want to be 'working' i.e. earning at the time of marriage and 58% (68% in case of those marrying late) want a working wife, which is in a way a good sign. So the youth are very much open to this idea and the reason for this could be the aspiration for better living conditions, long-term security in view of rising costs and glamour associated to having a working wife. The girls also see in it a way out of the drudgery and an enhanced power over their life. Field interviews with self-help group members showed immense difference in their confidence level, attitude and reduced dowry.

3.9 Settling the Unmarried Men

The topic of what the unmarried youth will do is very critical concern. When cornered, the youth admit to being reconciled for late marriage or even remaining unmarried. Consequently sex workers and homosexuality would have to be made more permissible, safe and organized as these are bound to be a big and open feature of the society in times to come. In the DLHS-2 only about 11% married men knew that HIV/AIDS could spread through homosexuality. During discussions with NGOs it was revealed that focused group discussions by NGO functionaries have established 'a homosexual experience' in the life of among 30-50% males.

Like those going for late marriage, will those who will not marry go for graduation and professional degrees? Undoubtedly the lot of unmarried men would be better if they strive for higher goals in life. It is a question of raising the self esteem, which in this case is bound to be compounded by a sense of failure or social stigma that the analysis shows society attaches single men being addressed as '*becharas*' meaning that 'they had no option'. The sociological implications of so large a share of youth being reconciled to not marrying has vast implications for the society.

It may become an issue of self-preservation also for the males. It was noticed during the field interviews and discussions that any male with even the slightest of physical disability or those who were very poor, with no parental assets, house etc. were usually resigned to living a forced bachelor's life. However, the resentment amongst such 'have-nots' against 'the haves' and also 'the state' will always be there and any provocation could result in crime. And as yet the female species is in abundance so the provocation will always be there. So crime in general and crime against women is bound to rise in female deficit areas as data from police records bureau also has shown. Another feature is the risk of shattering the household peace. Numerous instances are coming to light where organized gangs duped such unmarried men by promising a girl and not delivering, or the girl running away after a few nights with all the valuables of the house.

So homes, which are meant to be the places where one retreats for peace may no longer remain abodes of peace which will make situation difficult for the society at large.

The other likely outcomes positive as well as negative will be: Positive: better prospects for widow re-marriage; rise in status (value) of women; more male enrolment in higher education; etc. On the other hand the negatives will be: flesh trade, cross-cultural migration of women and men, breaking down further of the joint family (by outsider daughters-in-law) and possibly higher divorce rates, chances of poly-andry, increase in crime in general and crime against women and children specially, sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV/AIDS), increase in consumption of drugs, narcotics, alcohol etc., higher pre and extra marital sex and instances of same-sex especially amongst males. Other affected areas would be male migration, sale of male specific products, job market, demand for social security 30-40 years from now (when these youth grow up), law and order scene (rioting etc.) and even National security. Overall, if not tapped properly, it may adversely affect the GDP itself but if tapped properly and in a timely manner, there can be the demographic dividend much talked about.

The sad part is that the situation regarding sex ratio was bad earlier also in certain regions like Haryana, Punjab but the society was not talking about it and conveniently importing girls from other regions. So our demographic and sociological fraternity could not notice the crisis till it came. Interviews revealed that now there are certain castes where getting a bride even in marriage sammelans is difficult.

But if today the society outcasts the unmarried, or find faults with them and they have a bad time then in that context it is important as to whether society is prepared for a large army of such unmarried men? The question is whether the society is ready for legalizing polyandry. Will it be humane towards the woman in question? Will society accept those who pay and get girls for marriage? What will be the psycho-social implications of such transaction on the society?

The Drishti study has addressed this issue and reports that 'Over two thirds of the men feel that they do have a respect in the family as well in the society after the marriage (by buying wife).According to 85% men their wife is accepted in the family and in 77% report that she is accepted in the village as wife of this man. At the same time surprisingly 40% of the affected males don't themselves approve of such a marriage. They say 'This is not the way it has to happen, it is just an arrangement', in spite of acceptance in the society and better life after marriage. The study reports that though the first son may get a local girl, these sorts of marriages are common among 2nd son onwards. The girls who are bought will not get the status they deserve as daughters-in-law, but they are the girls who work hard-get up early morning and will be last sleepers (Drishti, 2010).

The attitude to serve the society by over 90% respondents in various ways can be seen as an immense opportunity, even made into a fashion amongst youth for instance by making the celebrities choosing to remain unmarried and serve the society (as was done by Bhagat Singh, Azad etc). The willingness is there with a huge 69% of the respondents who responded (and 55.9% overall) agreed that in view of the adverse sex ratio they may consider remaining unmarried and serving the society.

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One day will we land up with a department of single men's affairs? Who will represent their constituency? Politically they are likely to be a very much wanted, active group which indeed will have to be settled peacefully. Can the society move on to give them space? Recent news says in USA there are 51% single women. Single women are more socially connected, economically stable, and happier than ever before there. Will such a thing happen in India too albeit for men.

3.10 The Role of Family

The role of family of those choosing not to marry will be critical. Firstly the role of parents will obviously lessen, as the analysis also shows. But the drop will be far larger as most Indian parents dream of settling their children during their lifetime itself. And in these cases that is not going to be. The question is will the parents and other family members empathize with such persons? Division of property will be a major concern. The married siblings would naturally eye the share of the 'un-inheritable' share of unmarried men in the family property. While there have been reports of such unmarried siblings being eliminated to get control of their property from U.P. where such forced bachelors are stated to have made clubs to save themselves from property hungry siblings.

3.11 The Late Marriage Group

One direct consequence of falling sex ratio will be the late marriage of a large percentage of men. Analysis shows that parents of those who preferred to marry late were generally more in white collar or blue collared jobs (20% more) while those who preferred early marriage were more in agriculture sector (59% vs. 31% for late seekers). Now mentally the youth are aware of this risk and would either plan to marry within 4 or 7 years or equip themselves for a solitary inn if made aware well in time. On the positive side, this would motivate people to accept the challenge, and compete for the girl either by using this time in getting better qualifications, macho image, or acquiring better wealth. Also, those marrying late are more likely to seek wife of higher age and prefer working wife more (68.1%) as compared to 52.3% of those marrying early. Further, overall the share of those seeking graduation and professional degrees was far more amongst late marriage seekers.

On the negative side, it would make hopeless those who are already less resourceful. It was cited by people in their interviews that in the past it used to be said that "if a boy is not doing anything marry him off and he will become responsible". That avenue of getting married to become serious is being blocked; it may be risky now to have a useless son. So sex ratio changes and lower share of females can be made an issue of self-preservation also. Counselling will therefore be necessary for youth who feel that they may not get their match in the marriage market.

4.0 Strategies for Action

4.1 Economic Strategies

1. *Reducing cost of education of girls* making it either free or subsidizing the interest on loans taken to educate the girls, free bicycles to go to schools etc.
2. Senior citizens with no male issue should be given special *tax sops* and health insurance so that their old age is taken care of.

3. Tax sops should also be made available to parents having just one child a daughter or those with two daughters to help settle the daughters.
4. *Unmarried men can be a niche market* for special single housing, adventure sports, liquor and narcotics, special clothing, ready to eat foods etc.

4.2 Educational Strategies

1. Preference be given to marginal land holders and girls by 25% reservation in the professional course like ITIs and diplomas
2. There being an odd number and male preference being strong in Muslims necessitates that those with one/two children should be counselled very differently on gender sensitization very urgently.
3. *Opening the youth to see themselves* through compulsory/voluntary service in military/NCC/NSS for two years after 12th class can act as a great opportunity to engage the youth and develop vision and plan in life. Gap year should be allowed and encouraged.
4. *Developing respect for vocational education* in general: glamorizing and subsidizing vocational education and placement services for youth.
5. Special *functional literacy* classes may be started for parents, adults to make them aware of the sex ratio deficit and coping strategies.
6. *Sex education* for all youth to demystify sex and fertility issues and encourage safe sex even in case of homosexuality etc.

4.3 Technological Strategies

1. IEC should be language and area specific and focus more on Radio as TV is usually not allowed in Mewati Muslim homes e.g an FM Channel dedicated to women. Schools in Mewat should teach in Urdu to retain students.
2. Strict enforcement of PNDT Act and prosecution through decoy customers.
3. Exploring the male frequenting joints like rural/suburban mechanics, pharmacists etc to rope in the males.

4.4 Politico-legal Strategies

1. *Raising the Status of women* by removing drudgery from the lives of women providing basic civic amenities to households like toilets, bathrooms, LPG, and also through uniform personal code, laws on dowry, domestic violence and marriage, property rights, Property registration in the names of girls, Reservation of 33% for women in all public domains etc.
2. For tapping the *masculine demographic dividend*, males should be encouraged to migrate to other countries and NRIs should take a serious look at this problem and sponsor and train male youth from their area well in advance in vocations and languages that are needed abroad in large numbers e.g farmhands, caregivers etc.
3. *Career counselling* for youth should be provided by the state and the NGOs from a very early date so that the youth can be purposefully engaged well in time.
4. Developing cheap real estate options for stay/ renting by unmarried men.
5. Promoting sports, adventure and social service activities in a mission mode especially to keep the youth, especially surplus males constructively engaged.

4.5 Social Strategies

1. *Empowering the youth* spiritually so that they can stand on their own and take sensible decisions through Indian spiritual organizations.

2. *Practising Equality* promoting values of equality among both sexes as also amongst various castes and creeds. Making male children co-share in doing the household work to reduce drudgery of female child.
3. A Focussed IEC (Information Education and Communication) Campaign targeting males, especially unmarried ones males and opinion leaders. To give them viable way of life and make them acceptable and respectable in the society. Making society sensitive and supportive towards their needs and circumstances.
4. *Follow up on the First Child*: Counselling to the family should be enhanced after the first delivery, especially if it is a female.
5. *Corporate Social Responsibility*: should be heavily incentivised by means of tax sops and infrastructural support.
6. Corporates, NGO sector, Indian defence and para military forces may choose to patronise unmarried men by offering them jobs and adventure activities lifelong.
7. *Youth Campaign Against Dowry*, and for low cost simple marriages.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Strategies to improve sex ratio need to be diversified encompassing economic, educational, technological, social, and politico-legal- facilitations. Development of client friendly systems to monitor and review the strategies periodically for corrective actions is also desirable. It is envisaged that the- recommendations cited earlier will keep getting adapted based on the changes in the context and the achievements of the strategies implemented. The key elements for success would essentially be the people (involved in designing and executing the program), the client groups who have to own up the basic responsibility as citizens, the processes, which have to be flexible, adaptive, and client friendly and with a sense of purpose and urgency. It has to be appreciated that all the gains of liberalization and current enthusiasm about India's future hinges on our ability to make significant changes in our population growth, status of women, and empowerment of the underdeveloped segments of the society.

~~To conclude,~~ This paper is an attempt to list out the issues that are critical to existing demographic regime and that can be implemented by individual as well as collective commitment, for anyone willing to take responsibility for what the next generation will face. The research identifies universal and secular features like respecting the girl child, neither paying nor expecting dowry and not depending upon anyone for old age survival are all things that youth can relate to and achieve in life. The implementing mechanisms identified included, the Central Government, the State Governments, the urban as well as rural 'Local Bodies', the Corporate sector, the NGOs, the NRIs, the Spiritual Leaders, the media, and the political elite whose commitment can make all the difference and finally the 'Citizens', specifically the youths. Monitoring and follow up has to be, apart from the financing bodies, by the citizens groups (NGOs) and the individuals.

The issues related to family-sex selection are not as simple as they appear to be and a lot of research is needed in this area. This study was limited in terms of having to be on the literates only as the illiterates could no way fill up the questionnaires. Further, the study was carried out entirely on boys ~~because of cultural and time factors~~. The males are the ones going to be most affected (and already are) and the key lies in making them aware about the ground reality well in advance not only to change the age-old bias

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against the girl child but also prepare the males to live alone and take responsibility of their own life in the altered circumstances. NGOs like AAPSI have promoted Kuan Poojan (well worship) and other rituals to celebrate the arrival of girl child at par with the boys and also taking an extra vow (8th vow) at the time of marriage to save the female foetus and allow it to prosper. But a lot more needs to be done to make the males really aware of the looming crisis. The problem needs to be taken up head on in a campaign mode or else the societal cost in terms of crime and violence can be very high. The investment in creating public awareness may turn out to be a fraction of the social cost of a sex deficit society. Some small things are happening, but a lot more needs to be done, before it is too late. Haryana Govt has made schemes like Apni Beti Apna Dhan , Balika Samridhi Yojana ,Shagun Yojana, concessions to women on registration of property and in electricity tariff, reservation amongst teachers for women and free education to girls upto college level. But the society still thinks that this is a problem which the Government must solve and has not really got active. To that end male awareness and activity will make a significant difference to salvage the situation.

Further, ~~research is needed on many areas like~~ longitudinal studies are needed on as to when the youth pick up their ability to decide the vital things in life (like marriage, family etc). In addition, on the fate of one child families, are they happy about their decision, has it been good for themselves? A detailed study on per capita holdings and its impact on family size and composition can be very useful, as size of agricultural land and other properties does seem to be a very important factor not to be ignored. The fate and future of the unmarried males also needs to be explored further ~~through longitudinal studies~~. The issues of male and female sexuality, specifically the same sex attraction, the pre-marital and extra marital sex, and its impact on social fabric and disease burden and innovative ways to take care of the aged should be studied further as also. ~~How to tap the energy of the youth constructively, needs to be studied further.~~ Finally, ways to promote entrepreneurship and raise self-esteem of youth and coping strategies for them need to be examined further.

This study ~~will be able to~~ provides policy guidelines and ideas of opportunities to organizations and individuals interested in converting thoughts into action. It is said that a little action is worth thousands of words. This paper outlines numerous practicable actions having long-term implications and professionals dealing with policy impacting society in general and youth in particular will immensely benefit from the propositions made here. Concrete plans of action can be drawn up for individual departments like: women and child development (on enhancing scope of *anganwadis* from body to mind, self esteem of children), rural development (amenities raising status of women), primary education (values education), secondary and higher education (vocational education, sex and life cycle education, raising self esteem of youth), sports and youth (promoting sports, adventure activities to tap the surplus males, health and family welfare (for IEC, AIDS tie up and training the RMPs/AYUSH practitioner to become partners in catering to the males), Companies Affairs (to open avenues for corporate social responsibility), Finance and Revenue (to allocate funds or and incentivize youth development initiatives and corporate participation(CSR), the personnel and training department (to sensitise the bureaucracy about youth problems needing immediate attention), the parliamentary affairs (to enrol the politicians into discussing and engaging into youth self esteem and other issues and family welfare itself), the National Population Council and the Council

for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technologies (CAPART). The social sector (NGOs) would have to draw up their own action plan and the individuals determined to make a difference too can do so for sure. Last but not the least the spiritual and religious leaders must take the lead to shake up and wake up the society towards this major social evil of sex selection. They still have a hold on the human mind in the Orient and this can be used constructively to save the girl child and human future in the area. Similar action can be initiated in other affected areas in the Hindi heartland.

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Table 1.3 Ideal Family Size in Rural/Urban & Developed/Backward Areas

Ideal No. of Kids		Urban / Rural (a6)			Dev. Distt.:Pkl+Amb/ Backward:Bh+Mewat		
		Urban	Rural	Total	Pkl+ Amb	Bh+ Mewat	Total
-Category of Ideal No. of Kids (a87Cat)							
1 Kid	N	5	14	19	11	8	19
% within Ideal No. of Kids		26.3	73.7	100.0	57.9	42.1	100.0
% within R-U or Dev/Back Distt		6.3	6.4	6.4	8.5	4.7	6.4
% of Total		1.7	4.7	6.4	3.7	2.7	6.4
2 Kids	N	59	141	200	92	108	200
% within Ideal No. of Kids		29.5	70.5	100	46	54	100
% within R-U or Dev/Back Distt		74.7	64.1	66.9	71.3	63.5	66.9
% of Total		19.7	47.2	66.9	30.8	36.1	66.9
3 or More kids	N	15	65	80	26	54	80
% within Ideal No. of Kids		18.8	81.3	100.0	32.5	67.5	100.0
% within R-U or Dev/Back Distt		19.0	29.5	26.8	20.2	31.8	26.8
% of Total		5.0	21.7	26.8	8.7	18.1	26.8
Total	N	79	220	299	129	170	299
% within Ideal No. of Kids		26.4	73.6	100.0	43.1	56.9	100
% within R-U or Dev/Back Distt		100	100	100	100	100	100
% of Total		26.4	73.6	100.0	43.1	56.9	100

Table 3.1 Impact of Faith on Various Parameter

Parameter	Yes-N	Yes %	No	No%	Total-N	Missing %
Population	282	67.6	134	32.1	416	3.0
Familysize	195	47.3	216	52.4	411	4.2
SexSelection	229	55.6	182	44.2	411	4.2
Age at Marriage	209	50.9	201	48.9	410	4.4
Status of Women	271	66.3	137	33.5	408	4.9

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Annexure-I

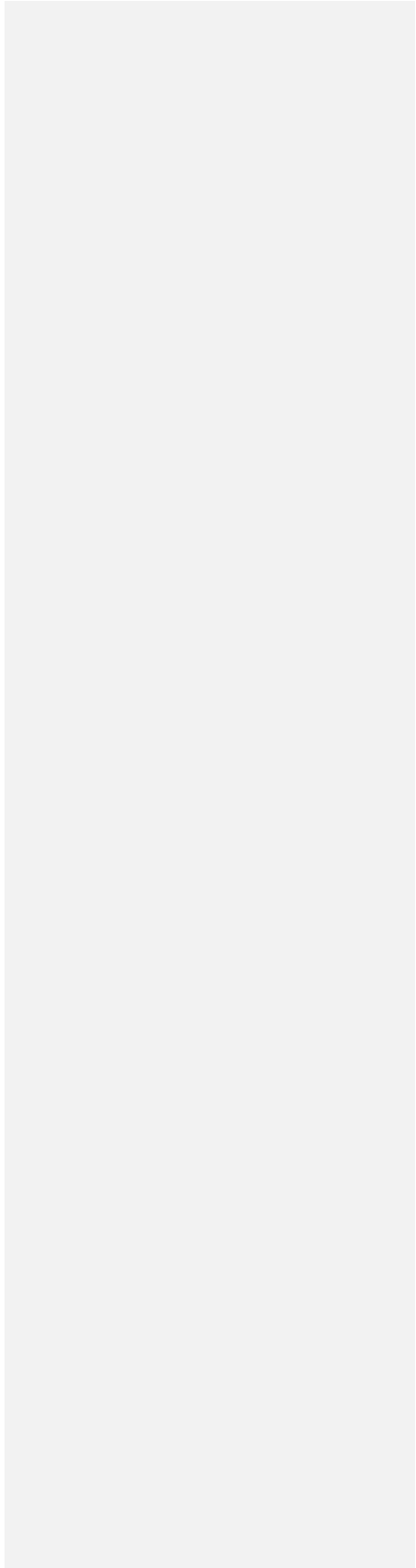


Table Summary 5.31 of Findings on Hypothesis Regarding Sex -Ratio

S No/	Findings on Sex Ratio
Hypot hesis	“Higher the awareness of youth regarding the consequences of declining sex ratio the more they would be willing to do some thing about it.”
1	The awareness about actual sex ratio is very low of less than 1/5th of the population that too of the state and Country level. The knowledge of ideal sex ratio is worse. This despite 88% saying that they feel sex ratio is an issue. The knowledge of Muslims is only 5-8% regarding ideal sex ratio.
2	The physically handicapped males and the financially deprived will find it more difficult to get a girl and crime may go up.
3	The sex ratio at birth order one turns out to be 1035 which shows attitude of youth is liberal as far as the sex of the first child is concerned. However, the sex ratio of the subsequent birth orders falls to 679 for the second child and only 286 for the third child.
4	The existence of more males compared to females is seen in all categories, more so among the landless (2.45 boys vs. 1.78 girls) and the small shareholding farmers (3.17 males vs. 2.33 females).
5	Sex ratio of existing families comes to 747 for the sibling’s children. Own family the sex ratio is worked out from the number of brothers and sisters which comes out to be 647 compared to the weighted mean sex ratio of parental generation still comes out to be 875.
6	Sex Ratio of families ‘desired’ by the youths indicated a sex ratio of 829. For Hindus (including Sikhs) and Muslims a sex ratio of 867 for Hindus and only 744 for Muslims emerges.
7	Sex Ratio of off-springs reported by currently married men, is 1260 for the first-born children but that of the second born children falls to a drastic 318.
8	In fact 60% of total, 58% amongst the Hindus and 70% Muslims have the perception of shortage of females. The overall mean shortage of women is reported at 21.9% (Perception of Hindus is 20.6% and of Muslims is 25.2%).
9	Those with a girl as their first child are more inclined to seek a boy while those with a boy already are very likely to accept a girl. But demand for “second male child”, exists in certain communities as in Mewat.
10	-22 out of the 23 who indicated three children as the ideal size wanted two boys and one girl. The standard deviation of the third child is almost 3 times that of the second child. It shows that while people are sure about two kids, the question of third is open to review. -The sex ratio of two child ‘small family’ desired by the youths turns out to be 990 for Hindus and 939 for Muslims. However, for the 3-child family whereas the Hindus give a sex ratio of 1114, the Muslims turn up with a sex ratio of almost 649.
11	Generally speaking, those preferring the sex selection (of male child) either had ‘no knowledge or wrong knowledge’ of the sex ratio of their area or are not aware of the consequences of preferring the male child only.

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