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## A PROFILE OF THE GIRL CHILD IN INDIA

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## ABSTRACT

*The girl child is a valuable asset of a nation. She is our future. She is to be protected against discrimination in education, skill development and training so that she is able to lead a life free from all forms of discrimination. She has been facing many problems in her life such as early marriage, malnutrition, child abuse, trafficking, physical assault, kidnapping etc. These have been distorting the demographic, health, education and social status of the girl child. She has the potential to become leaders. All the present forms of discrimination against her has to be curtailed by taking stringent action by the government and the mindset of the people should change for the good. A girl child today is a tomorrows woman. So protect her and uplift her in all walks of life.*

## KEYWORDS

girl child, economic distortions, discrimination.

## INTRODUCTION

India with 1.21 billion is ranked second most populous country in the world. Its child population represents 39% of the total population of the country. The total population of the girl child between 0-14 years constitutes 19% and 40% of the entire woman in the country. The girl child is a valuable asset of the nation. She is to be protected against discrimination in education, skill development and training so that she is able to lead a life free from all forms of discrimination. She has been facing many problems in her life such as early marriage, malnutrition, child abuse, trafficking, physical assault, kidnapping etc. These have been distorting the demographic, health, education and social status of the girl child. She has the potential to become leaders.

India celebrates 24<sup>th</sup> January of every year as the National Girl child's Day. The idea is to create awareness among people for the need to support and provide opportunities for the girl child as she is the unit of reproduction and family whose well-being strengthens the social and economic fabric of our country. With this background the current study focuses on the following objectives.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To sketch the demographic factors that distorts her status.
2. To portray the distortions in health factors.
3. To point out the disparities in education
4. To examine the distortions in the social front.

## METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature and it is based on the secondary source of data published by various Census Reports, ILO Reports and Statistics published by UN. The findings of the study are discussed as follows.

## DEMOGRAPHIC DISTORTIONS

With India's population at 1.21 billion of whom 19% represents the total population of the girl child between 0-14 years of age. According to Census 1991-2011 child sex ratio declined from 945 females per 1000 males to 914 females per 1000 males. The drop in the child sex ratio has been largely due to sex selective abortion.

Up to 50 million girls are "missing" from India's population. Another factor contributing to low child sex ratio is the high under 5 mortality rates of girls in India. According to NFHS III girls have 61 % higher mortality than boys at the age of 1-4 years of age. Female foeticide is a critical concern in India. It has increased over the past few decades. There have been a total of 132 cases of foeticide reported in 2011. The highest number was registered in Madhya Pradesh followed by Chhattisgarh and Punjab which together reported 56% of the total foeticide in the past 20 years in the accounted for 10 million females tumors termination female mortality is higher 224 out of 400 districts in India.

## HEALTH DISTORTIONS

Maternal mortality is the long term fall out of the neglect and deprivations undergone by the girl child. Out of 12 million girls born in India, 1 million die before their first birthday. Death rate among girls below the age of four years is higher than that of boys. Malnutrition begins with under nourish mothers giving birth to low weight girl child. The girl child grows stunted and underweight. Gender discrimination is the main reason for the persistent low levels of nutrition in India. One in every two girls in India is malnourished. Seventy four percent of India's children below the age of three months are anemic. Malnutrition has been the main reason for various deaths and diseases. Healthy and prosperous women hood depend on the health and nutrition status of girl child.

## DISPARITIES IN EDUCATION

Education is an important tool for social empowerment. On the one hand it is a fundamental right of children on the other hand is the diminish prospects that girls have in education. This is mainly due to gender discrimination. Nearly 65 percent of the 121 million children of the world who are not in schools are girls. 53% of girls in age group of 5-9 years are illiterate in India. In India 37% of girls age 7-14 years of age belonged to the tribes do not attend school compared to 26% of the majority girls of the same age. Nearly 43 million girls are enrolled in schools, many others complete fewer than 6 years of schooling so the gap between boys and girls has widened. The school attendance of tribal girls is 9% points below that of tribal boys.

According to a recent independent study by majority of HRD an estimated 3.7% children in 6-10 years of age and 5.2% in 11-13 year of age were out of school. In terms of numbers about 8 million children in the age group of 6-13 years were out of school, about 6-7 million in rural and 1.3 million in urban areas. Even in the case of secondary school attendance there has been a sharp drop in attendance among girls. Early marriage, distance to school, lack of transport, attend household chores, lack of separate toilets for girls, no female teacher, lack of safety, had to take care of siblings were some of the reasons for the drop out stated by 1/3<sup>rd</sup> girls. As per Census 2011, the effective literacy rate is 63.07%. The literacy for males being 69.76% while 55.97% constitutes female literacy so the male-female gap is 13.79%. In spite of great progress in education over the years there still persist inequalities in terms of accessibility. As per the Annual State of Educational Report (2014) the trends in enrolment reflects a decline from 72.9% to 63.5% in rural areas. School dropout rates among adolescent girls are as high as 63.5% (MOSPI 2012). One out of 6<sup>th</sup> girl child dies due to greater discrimination.



**DISTORTIONS IN THE SOCIAL STATUS**

There is a pervasive human rights violation in the World. Violence within and outside the family shape their attitudes towards life. Discrimination starts from their birth. The girl child is treated as a liability and is unwelcome in the family.

One out of four girls is abused before the age of four. The girl child is often ill-treated and abused at home either verbally or physically. Nearly one half (44%) of the adolescent girls worldwide aged 15-19 years think a husband or partner is justified in beating his wife or partner under certain circumstances.

In the community the girl child is always vulnerable because of her sex. She is subject to physical assault, rape, kidnapping etc. According to Child info. Org (UNICEF June 2011) study reported that in India 5% of the girls aged between 15-19 years were victims of sexual violence. The Trafficking in persons Report (2014) has reported that over 90% of the trafficking is done within the borders and 10% in from overseas women and young girls (9-14 years) have been trafficked from Nepal and Bangladesh into India for sexual exploitation. Most of them were sold to brothels, kidnapped or forced out of their homes and sold by parents and relatives in order to get out of abject poverty. Every 10 minutes somewhere in the world adolescent girl dies as a result of violence. In emergencies, they are vulnerable to sexual violence and abducted exploited for sexual purposes.

Another serious crime against the girl child is the child labour. The ILO estimates for 2012 suggests that out of 47.5 million adolescents aged 15-17 years 13% were in hazardous work composed of 8.8 million girls and 38.7 million boys. The number of adolescents in hazardous work is greatest in India (2.4 millions). 2 out of 5 employed adolescents globally are in hazardous work. One in every 11 children in India is working as child labour. 80% of the working children are based in rural areas and 3 out of 4 of them work in agriculture as cultivators or household industries. More than half of the 5.5 million working children in India are concentrated in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra.

Dowry harassment and child marriages are having been legally prohibited yet worldwide more than 700 million women were married as children (below 18 years of age). One in 3 or some 250 million were married before 15 years. Amongst married woman in India today, 75% were under aged at the time of their marriage, according to the UN Statistics on girl child in India. Dowry harassments reported are in the form of accidental burns and suicide deaths.

**CONCLUSION**

Mindsets of people have to change if the girl child is to live a life of dignity and respect. All present forms of discrimination against the girl child can be put an end if stringent action is taken by the government. As the girl child today is a tomorrow's woman who has all the potentialities to serve the nation at large.

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