



Mains Practice Question

Q. “The skewed child sex ratio could upset the gains from a falling fertility rate in India.” In the light of the statement discuss the reasons and suggest solutions to address low child sex ratio. (250 words)

20 Oct, 2020 GS Paper 2 Social Justice

Approach

- Introduce by briefly explaining the given statement with some facts.
- Discuss the reasons for low sex ratio at birth.
- Suggest a way forward to address the issues of low child sex ratio.
- Conclude suitably on a positive note.

Introduction

- The recently released Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical report estimated that India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) was around 2.2 in the year 2018, which is close to the replacement rate of 2.1. However, on flip side it highlights the declining sex ratio at birth in India that has further got reduced from 906 in 2011 to 899 in 2018.
- Issues with lower child sex ratio:
 - **Gender-imbalance:** An adverse child sex ratio is also reflected in the distorted gender makeup of the entire population. According to World Bank, in 2031, India will have 936 females per 1,000 males, lower than the sex ratio in 1951 of 946 females per 1,000 males.
 - **Distortion in the Marriage System:** Adverse ratio results in a gross imbalance in the number of men and women and its inevitable impact on marriage systems as well as other harms to women.

Body

Reasons For Skewed Sex Ratio

- **Gender Bias:** According to information from the UNPFA, reasons for female infanticide include anti-female bias, as women are often seen as subservient to men, who often employ positions of power.
- **Son Meta-Preference:** In addition, parents believe they will be better taken care of in their old age by men, as men are perceived as the principal wage earners of the family.
- **Social Practices:** Parents of girls are usually expected to pay a dowry, which could be a massive expense, avoided by raising males.
- **Counter Effect of Rise in Income:** Contrary to popular perception, in India's sex ratio at birth declined even as per capita income increased nearly 10 times over the last 65 years, according to an IndiaSpend analysis of government data.
 - This could be because rising income, which results in increased literacy, makes it easier for families to access sex-selective procedures.

Addressing Low Child Sex Ratio

- **Bringing Behavioural Change:** Increasing female education and economic prosperity help to improve the ratio. In this pursuit, The government's Beti-Bachao Beti Padhao Campaign has achieved remarkable success in bringing behavioural change in the society.
- **Sensitizing Youth:** There is an urgent need to reach young people for reproductive health education and services as well as to cultivate gender equity norms.
 - Regarding the services of Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) can be leveraged, especially in rural areas.
- **Stringent Enforcement of Law:** India must implement the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994 more stringently and dedicate more resources to fighting the preference for boys.
 - In this context, the Drugs Technical Advisory Board decision to include ultrasound machines in the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, is a step in the right direction.

Conclusion

Although India has created several impressive goals to reduce its population growth rates, it has a long way to go to achieve meaningful population policy which are not only based on quantitative control but qualitative control as well.

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