

Ultrasound Sonography Centres and Child Sex Ratio across Maharashtra: A District Level Analysis

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The child sex ratio (f/m) in Maharashtra has declined by 33 points from 946 in 1991 to 913 in 2001. The present study tries to understand the possible role of Ultrasound Sonography Centres in this context. The study uses data on child sex ratio from Census of India 2001 and the data on district-wise Ultrasound Sonography Centres from the State Family Welfare Bureau, Government of Maharashtra. It is observed that the sonography centres in Maharashtra are unevenly distributed across 35 districts. Correlation and regression analyses at the district level confirm a significant negative association/relationship between the availability of sonography facilities and child sex ratio in Maharashtra. The results, of course, indicate that there is a need to regulate the proliferation and functioning of sonography centres.

As per census of India 2001 the sex ratio of child population (number of girls per 1000 boys) in the age group 0-6 years in the country as a whole was not only much lower than the global sex ratio at birth (943-952 girls per 1000 boys) but it declined sharply from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001 (India, Registrar General 2001). In some regions/states of the country, the decline in child sex ratio was shockingly large and has attracted serious attention of researchers, activists, policy makers, medical community, law enforcing authorities etc. around the country. The reasons for the decline in child sex ratio have been extensively documented in recent years by researchers (e.g. *see* Agnihotri 2000, Bhat 2002a and 2002b, Guilmoto 2007). India, with largely patriarchal kinship pattern, is known for son preference and discriminatory social practices against women (Miller 1981, Das Gupta 1987). While the overall survival of women and children in India improved considerably in recent years owing to expansion of primary health care, the easy availability and accessibility to new medical

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