

Chapter 10

REGIONAL PATTERN OF GENDER BIAS IN CHILD HEALTH IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Health being one of the most basic capabilities, the removal of gender bias in child health can go a long way in achieving gender parity in various dimensions of human development. The present study examines the region-wise pattern of gender bias in child health in India. It uses six selected indicators of health outcome (childhood nutrition and childhood survival) and health-seeking behaviour (e.g., full immunisation, diarrhoea treatment, fever/ cough treatment and breast-feeding). Three rounds of unit level National Family Health Survey data are analysed using Borda Rule and Principal Component Analysis techniques. Children under age three years are the unit of the analysis. The study found that any consistently robust region-wise pattern of gender bias against girl children in child health is *not* present among all the six Indian regions of states over the three rounds of NFHS. The north region succeeded in reducing gender bias over the years but there is almost consistently high gender bias in the central region. There is, however, a consistent regional pattern in the absolute health achievement by girl children. To reduce gender bias in child health, the policy makers should try to raise health achievement of girl children more attentively in the central, east and northeast regions.

INTRODUCTION

Advancement of health care services is of utmost importance for its *intrinsic* value. The provision of public health is a basic human right and a crucial *merit* good. With the inception of the *Human Development Index* (HDI), the *Human Poverty Index* (HPI), and the *Gender-*

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