

Chapter 23

State-wise 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 many other dimensions of human development. The present study examines the state-wise pattern of gender bias in child health in India. It uses 21 selected indicators of health outcome (e.g., post-neonatal death, child death and prevalence of malnutrition) and health-seeking behaviour (e.g., full immunisation, oral rehydration therapy, 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 state-wise pattern of gender bias against girl children in child health is not present among all the 29 Indian states over the three rounds of NFHSs. Among the major 19 states, there is high gender bias in three Empowered Action Group of states (namely, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar) and in Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, and Gujarat as well. However, there is a consistent state-wise pattern in girl children's health achievement. With Rawlsian theory of justice, to reduce gender bias in child health we need to focus on the states with low health achievement by girls.

Keywords: Gender bias, child health, National Family Health Survey, India

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