

# **Sex Differentials in Child Health and Nutritional Status**

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## **Abstract**

Son preference, or the privileging of sons over daughters in accordance to a patriarchal system, is a growing phenomenon in India. In the era of UN Millennium Development Goals where one of the objectives is to 'increase gender equality and empower women', the issue of son preference is even more widely debated. The data for the study is drawn from the National Family Health Surveys. The main objective of this paper is to examine the patterns of gender differences for children in the north state of Punjab in India for health outcomes. Specifically it addresses the incidence, and use of preventive and curative health care services and nutrition. Does the extent of male bias if it is present, depend on the socioeconomic status, caste, religion, education, and rural/urban residence of the head of the household? The odds of female children being discriminated against with respect to each of these indicators are estimated by using logistic regression analysis. Analyses results the gender bias as prevalent in health enhancing treatment for immunization and in giving nutrition to boys specifically. In Punjab, discrimination against girls and favor of boys is inherited by each generation of parents. Studies reflect that people living in both the rural and the urban parts of Punjab prefer sons to daughters. Also, nutritionally girls have lower ratings than boys. The living status of a family does not matter in the biased preference for a boy child; whether the family is rich or poor, the lower nutrition food is confined to a girl child only.

Key words: Gender, health care, nutrition, children, discrimination and Goals.